



MISTLETOE.

DRAWN BY G. A. STOREY, A.R.A.



PRINCESS ICE-HEART

A FAIRY-TALE

By M^{rs} MOLESWORTH.

IN the olden times there lived a King who was worthy of the name. He loved his people, and his people loved him in return. His kingdom must have been large; at least it appears to be beyond doubt that it extended a good way in different directions, for it was called the Kingdom of the Four Orts, which, of course, as everybody knows, means that he had possessions north, south, east, and west.

It was not so large, however, but that he was able to manage it well for himself—that is to say, with certain help which I will tell you of. A year never passed without his visiting every part of his dominions and inquiring for himself into the affairs of his subjects. Perhaps—who can say?—the world was not so big in those days; doubtless, however that may have been, there were not so many folk living on it.

Many things were different in those times: many things existed which nowadays would be thought strange and incredible. Human beings knew much more than they do now about the other dwellers on the earth. For instance, it was no uncommon case to find learned men who were able to converse with animals quite as well as with each other. Fairies, of course, were often visible to mortal eyes, and it was considered quite natural that they should interfere for good—sometimes, perhaps, for evil; as to that I cannot say—in human affairs. And good King Brave-Heart was especially favoured in this way. For the help which, as I said, was his in governing his people was that of four very wise counsellors indeed—the four fairies of the North and the South, the East and the West.

These sisters were very beautiful as well as very wise. Though older than the world itself, they always looked young. They were very much attached to each other, though they seldom met, and it must be confessed that sometimes on such occasions there were stormy scenes, though they made it up afterwards. And the advice they gave was always to be relied upon.

Now, King Brave-Heart was married. His wife was young and charming, and devotedly fond of him. But she was of a rather jealous and exacting disposition, and she had been much spoilt in her youth at her own home. She was sweet and loving, however, which makes up for a good deal, and always ready to take part in any scheme for the good of their people, provided it did not separate her from her husband.

They had no children, though they had been married for some years; but at last there came the hope of an heir, and the Queen's delight was unbounded—nor was the King's joy less than hers.

It was late autumn, or almost winter, when a great trouble befell the pretty Queen. The weather had grown suddenly cold, and a few snowflakes even had fallen before their time. But Queen Claribel only clapped her hands at the sight, for with the winter she hoped the baby would come, and she welcomed the signs of its approach on this account. The King, however, looked grave, and when the next morning the ground was all white, the trees and the bushes covered with silvery foliage, he looked graver still.



Then she turned to the fairy and upbraided her in unmeasured language.



"And you," said the Queen bitterly, "you, cold-hearted fairy, what will you give my child?"

"Something is amiss," he said. "The Fairy of the North must be on her way, and it is not yet time for her visit."

And that very afternoon the snow fell again, more heavily than before, and the frost-wind whistled down the chimneys and burst open the doors and windows, and all the palace servants went hurrying and scurrying about to make great fires and hang up thick curtains and get everything in order for the cold season, which they had not expected so soon.

"It will not last," said the King, quietly. "In a few days there will be milder weather again." But, nevertheless, he still looked grave.

And early the next morning, as he was sitting with the Queen, who was beginning to feel a little frightened at the continuance of the storm, the double doors of her boudoir suddenly flew open, an icy blast filled the room, and a tall, white-shrouded figure stood before them.

"I have come to fetch you, Brave-Heart," she said abruptly. "You are wanted, sorely wanted, in my part of the world. The people are starving: the season has been a poor one, and there has been bad faith. Some few powerful men have bought up the grain, which was already scarce, and refuse to let the poor folk have it. Nothing will save their lives or prevent sad suffering but your own immediate presence. Are you ready? You must have seen I was coming."

She threw off her mantle as she spoke and sank on to a couch. Strong as she was, she seemed tired with the rate at which she had travelled, and the warm air of the room was oppressive to her. Her clear, beautiful features looked harassed; her grey eyes full of anxiety. For the moment she took no notice of the Queen.

"Are you ready?" she repeated.

"Yes, I am ready?" said Brave-Heart, as he rose to his feet.

But the Queen threw herself upon him, with bitter crying and reproaches. Would he leave her, and at such a time, a prey to all kinds of terrible anxiety? Then she turned to the fairy and upbraided her in unmeasured language. But the spirit of the North glanced at her with calm pity.

"Poor child!" she said. "I had almost forgotten you. The sights I have seen of late have been so terrible that they absorb me. Take courage, Claribel! Show yourself a Queen. Think of the suffering mothers and their little ones whom your husband hastens to aid. All will be well with you, believe me. But you, too, must be brave and unselfish."

It was no use. All she said but made the Queen more indignant. She would scarcely bid her husband farewell: she turned her back to the fairy with undignified petulance.

"Foolish child," said the Northern spirit. "She will learn better some day."

Then she gave all her attention to the matter she had come about, explaining to the King as they journeyed exactly the measures he must take and the difficulties to be overcome. But though the King had

the greatest faith in her advice, and never doubted that it was his duty to obey, his heart was sore, as you can understand.

Things turned out as he had said. The severe weather disappeared again as if by magic, and some weeks of unusually mild days followed. And when the winter did set in for good at last, it was with no great rigour. From time to time news reached the palace of the King's welfare. The tidings were cheering. His presence was effecting all that the fairy had hoped.

So Queen Claribel ought to have been happy. But she was determined not to be. She did nothing but cry and abuse the fairy, declaring that she would never see her dear Brave-Heart again, and that if ever her baby came she was sure it would not live, or that there would be something dreadful the matter with it.

"It is not fair," she kept saying, "it is a shame that I should suffer so."

And even when on Christmas Eve a beautiful little girl was born, as pretty and lively and healthy as could be wished, and even though the next day brought the announcement of the King's immediate return, Claribel still nursed her resentment, though in the end it came to be directed entirely against the fairy. For when she saw Brave-Heart again, his tender affection and his delight in his little daughter made it impossible for her not to "forgive him," as she expressed it, though she could not take any interest in his accounts of his visit to the north and all he had been able to do there.

A great feast was arranged in honour of the christening of the little-Princess. All the grand people of the neighbourhood were bidden to it, nor, you may be sure, did the good King forget the poorer folk. The four fairies were invited, for it was a matter of course that they should be the baby's godmothers. And though the Queen would gladly have excluded the Northern fairy, she dared not even hint at such a thing.

But she resolved in her own mind to do all in her power to show that she was not the welcome fairy.

On such occasions, when human beings were honoured by the presence of fairy visitors, these distinguished guests were naturally given precedence of all others, otherwise very certainly they would never have come again. Even among fairies themselves there are ranks and formalities, and the Queen well knew that the first place was due to the Northern spirit. But she gave instructions that this rule should be departed from, and the Snow fairy, as she was sometimes called, found herself placed at the King's left hand, separated from him by her sister of the West, instead of next to him on the right, which seat, on the contrary, was occupied by the fairy of the South. She glanced round her calmly, but took no notice; and the King, imagining that by her own choice perhaps,

she had chosen the unusual position, made no remark. And the feast progressed with the accustomed splendour and rejoicing.

But at the end, when the moment arrived at which the four godmothers were expected to state their gifts to the baby, the Queen's spite could be no longer concealed.

"I request," she exclaimed, "that for reasons well known to herself, to the King, and to myself, the Northern fairy's gift may be the last in order instead of the first."

The King started and grew pale. The beautiful, soft-voiced fairy of the South, in her glowing golden draperies, would fain have held back, for her affection for her sterner sister was largely mingled with awe. But the Snow fairy signed to her imperiously to speak.

"I bestow upon the Princess Sweet-Heart," she said, half trembling, "the gift of great beauty."

"And I," said the spirit of the East, who came next, her red robes falling majestically around her, her dark hair lying smoothly in its thick masses on her broad, low forehead, "I give her great powers of intellect and intelligence."

"And I," said the Western fairy, with a bright, breezy flutter of her sea-green garments, "health—perfect health and strength of body—as my gift to the pretty child."

"And you," said the Queen bitterly, "you, cold-hearted fairy, who have done your best to kill me with misery, who came between my husband and me, making him neglect me as he never would have done but for your influence—what will you give my child? Will you do something to make amends for the suffering you caused? I would rather my pretty baby were dead than that she lived to endure what I have of late endured."

"Life and death are not mine to bestow or to withhold," said the Northern spirit calmly, as she drew her white garments more closely round her with a majestic air. "So your rash words, foolish woman, fortunately for you all, cannot touch the child. But something—much—I can do, and I will. She shall not know the suffering you dread for her with so cowardly a fear. She shall be what you choose to fancy I am. And instead of the name you have given her, she shall be known for what she is—Princess Ice-Heart."

She turned to go, but the King on one hand, her three sisters on the other, started forward to detain her.

"Have pity!" exclaimed the former.

"Sister, bethink you," said the latter; the Western fairy adding beseechingly, the tears springing in her blue eyes, which so quickly changed from bright to sad, "Say something to soften this hard fate. Undo it you cannot, I know. Or, at least, allow me to mitigate it if I can."

The Snow fairy stopped; in truth, she was far from hard-hearted or remorseless, and already she was beginning to feel half sorry for what she had done.



One would try poetry, another his lute, a third sighs and appeals, a fourth, imagining he had made some way, would attempt the bold stroke of telling Ice-Heart that unless she could respond to his adoration he would drown himself.

"What would you propose?" she said coldly. The fairy of the West threw back her auburn hair with a gesture of impatience.

"I would I knew!" she said. "'Tis a hard knot you have tied, my sister. For that which would mend the evil wrought seems to me impossible while the evil exists—the cure and the cessation of the disease are one. How could the heart of ice be melted till tender feelings warm it, and how can tender feelings find entrance into a feelingless heart? Alas! alas! I can but predict what sounds like a mockery of your trouble," she went on, turning to the King, though indeed by this time she might have included the Queen in her sympathy, for Claribel stood, horrified at the result of her mad resentment, as pale as Brave-Heart himself. "Hearken!" and her expressive face, over which sunshine and showers were wont to chase each other as on an April day—for such, as all know, is the nature of the changeable lovable spirit of the West—for once grew still and statue-like, while her blue eyes pierced far into the distance. "The day on which the Princess of the Icy Heart shall shed a tear, that heart shall melt—but then only."

The Northern fairy murmured something under her breath, but what the words were no one heard, for it was not many that dared stand near to her, so terribly cold was her presence. The graceful spirit of the South fluttered her golden locks, and with a little sigh drew her radiant mantle round her, and kissed her hand in farewell, while the thoughtful-eyed, mysterious Eastern fairy linked her arm in that of her Western sister, and whispered that the solution of the problem should have her most earnest study. And the green-robed spirit tried to smile through her tears in farewell as she suffered herself to be led away.

So the four strange guests departed; but their absence was not followed by the usual outburst of unconstrained festivity. On the contrary, a sense of sorrow and dread hung over all who remained, and before long everyone not immediately connected with the palace respectfully but silently withdrew, leaving the King and Queen to their mysterious sorrow.

Claribel flew to the baby's cradle. The little Princess was sleeping soundly; she looked rosy and content—a picture of health. Her mother called eagerly to the King.

"She seems just as usual," she exclaimed. "Perhaps—oh! perhaps after all I have done no harm."

For, strange to say, her resentment against the Northern fairy had died away. She now felt nothing but shame and regret for her own wild temper. "Perhaps," she went on, "it was but to try me, to teach me a lesson, that the Snow fairy uttered those terrible words."

Brave-Heart pitied his wife deeply, but he shook his head.

"I dare not comfort you with any such hopes," he said, "my poor Claribel. The fairy is true—true as steel—if you could but have trusted her! Had you seen her, as I have done—full of tenderest pity for suffering—you could never have so maligned her."

Claribel did not answer, but her tears dropped on the baby's face. The little Princess seemed annoyed by them. She put up her tiny hand and, with a fretful expression, brushed them off.

And that very evening the certainty came.

The head nurse sent for the Queen while she was undressing the child, and the mother hastened to the nursery. The attendants were standing round in the greatest anxiety, for, though the baby looked quite well otherwise, there was the strangest coldness over her left side, in the region of the heart. The skin looked perfectly colourless, and the soft cambric and still softer flannel of the finest which had covered the spot were stiff, as if they had been exposed to a winter night's frost.

"Alas!" exclaimed Claribel, but that was all. It

was no use sending for doctors—no use doing anything. Her own delicate hand when she laid it on the baby's heart was, as it were, blistered with cold. The next morning she found it covered with chilblains.

But the baby did not mind. She flourished amazingly, heart or no heart. She was perfectly healthy, ate well, slept well, and soon gave signs of unusual intelligence. She was seldom put out, but when angry she expressed her feelings by loud roars and screams, though with never a tear! At first this did not seem strange, as no infant sheds tears during the earliest weeks of its life. But when she grew to six months old, then to a year, then to two and three, and was near her fourth birthday without ever crying, it became plain that the prediction was indeed to be fulfilled.

And the name "Ice-Heart" clung to her. In spite of all her royal parents' commands to the contrary, "Princess Ice-Heart" she was called far and near. It seemed as if people could not help it. "Sweet-Heart

they were skilful and well executed; she could play with brilliancy on various instruments. She had also been taught to sing, but her voice was metallic and unpleasing. But she could discuss scientific and philosophical subjects with the sages of her father's kingdom like one of themselves.

And besides all this care bestowed upon her training, no stone had been left unturned in hopes of awakening in the unfortunate girl some affection or emotion. Every day the most soul-stirring poetry was read aloud to her by the greatest elocutionists, the most exciting and moving dramas were enacted before her; she was taken to visit the poor of the city in their pitiable homes; she was encouraged to see sad sights from which most soft-hearted maidens would instinctively flee. But all was in vain. She would express interest and ask intelligent questions with calm, unmoved features and dry eyes. Even music, from which much had been hoped, was powerless to move her to aught but admiration of the performers' skill or curiosity as

to the construction of their instruments. There was but one peculiarity about her, which sometimes, though they could not have explained why, seemed to Ice-Heart's unhappy parents to hint at some shadowy hope. The sight of tears was evidently disagreeable to her. More certainly than anything else did the signs of weeping arouse one of her rare fits of anger—so much so that now and then, for days together, the poor Queen dared not come near her child, as tears were to her a frequent relief from her lifelong regrets.

So beautiful and wealthy and accomplished a maiden was naturally not without suitors; and from this direction, too, at first, Queen Claribel trusted fondly that cure might come.

"If she could but fall in love," she said, the first time the idea struck her.

"My poor dear!" replied the King, "to see, you must have eyes; to love, you must have a heart."

"But a heart she has," persisted the mother. "It is only, as it were, asleep—frozen, like the winter stream which bursts forth again into ever fresh life and movement with the awaking spring."

So lovers were invited, and lovers came and were made welcome by the dozen. Lovers of every description—rich and poor, old and young, handsome and ugly—so long as they were of passable birth and fair character, King Brave-Heart was not too particular—in the forlorn hope that among them one fortunate wight might rouse some sentiment in the lovely statue he desired to win. But all in vain. Each prince, or duke, or simple knight, duly instructed in the sad case,

did his best: one would try poetry, another his lute, a third sighs and appeals, a fourth, imagining he had made some way, would attempt the bold stroke of telling Ice-Heart that unless she could respond to his adoration he would drown himself. She only smiled, and begged him to allow her to witness the performance—she had never seen anyone drown. So, one by one, the troupe of aspirants—some in disgust, some in strange fear, some in annoyance—took their departure, preferring a more ordinary spouse than the bewitched though beautiful Princess.

And she saw them go with calmness, though, in one or two cases she had replied to her parents that she had no objection to marry Prince So-and-so, or Count Such-another, if they desired it—it would be rather agreeable to have a husband if he gave her plenty of presents and did all she asked.

"Though a sighing and moaning lover, or a man who is always twiddling a fiddle or making verses I could not stand," she would add contemptuously.

So King Brave-Heart thought it best to try no such experiment. And in future no gentleman was allowed to present himself except with the understanding that he alone who should succeed in making Princess



"Oh, Mamma!" she exclaimed, "I never!" and then she went off again.

we cannot name her, for sweet she is not," was murmured by all who came in contact with her.

And it was true. Sweet she certainly was not. She was beautiful and healthy and intelligent, but she had no feeling. In some ways she gave little trouble. Her temper, though occasionally violent, was, as a rule, placid; she seemed contented in almost all circumstances. When her good old nurse died, she remarked coolly that she hoped her new attendant would dress her hair more becomingly; when King Brave-Heart started on some of his distant journeys she bade him good-bye with a smile, observing that if he never came home again it would be rather amusing, as she would then reign instead of him, and when she saw her mother break into sobs at her unnatural speech she stared at her in blank astonishment.

And so things went on till Ice-Heart reached her seventeenth year. By this time she was, as regarded her outward appearance, as beautiful as the fondest of parents could desire; she was also exceedingly strong and healthy, and the powers of her mind were unusual. Her education had been carefully directed, and she had learnt with ease and interest. She could speak in several languages, her paintings were worthy of admiration, as

Ice-Heart shed a tear would be accepted as her betrothed.

This proclamation diminished at once the number of suitors. Indeed, after one or two candidates had failed, no more appeared—so well did it come to be known that the attempt was hopeless.

And for more than a year Princess Ice-Heart was left to herself—very much, apparently, to her satisfaction.

But all this time the mystic sisters were not idle or forgetful. Several of the aspirants to Ice-Heart's hand had been chosen by them and conveyed to the neighbourhood of the palace by their intermediary from remote lands. And among these, one of the few who had found some slight favour in the maiden's eyes was a special protégé of the Western fairy—the young and spirited Prince Francolin.

He was not one of the sighing or sentimental order of swains; he was full of life and adventure and brightness, and his heart was warm and generous. He admired the beautiful girl, but he pitied her still more, and this pity was the real motive which made him yield to the fairy's proposal that he should try again.

"You pleased the poor child," she said, when she arrived one day at the Prince's home to talk over her new idea. "You made her smile by your liveliness and fun. For I was there when you little knew it. The girl has been overdoled with sentimentality and doleful strains. I believe we have been on a wrong track all this time."

"What do you propose?" said Francolin, gravely, for he could be serious enough when seriousness was called for. "She did not actually dislike me, but that is the most that can be said; and however I may feel for her, however I may admire her beauty and intelligence, nothing would induce me to wed a bride who could not return my affection. Indeed, I could scarcely feel any for such a one."

"Ah no! I agree with you entirely," said the fairy. "But listen—my power is great in some ways. I am well versed in ordinary enchantment, and am most willing to employ my utmost skill for my unfortunate god-daughter."

She then unfolded to him her scheme, and obtained his consent to it.

"Now is your time," she said, in conclusion. "I hear on the best authority that Ice-Heart is feeling rather dull and bored at present. It is some time since she has had the variety of a new suitor, and she will welcome any distraction."

And she proceeded to arrange all the details of her plan.

So it came to pass that very shortly after the conversation I have related there was great excitement in the capital city of the kingdom of the Four Orts. After an interval of more than a year a new suitor had at length presented himself for the hand of the Princess Ice-Heart. Only the King and Queen received the news with melancholy indifference.

"He may try, as the others have done," said Brave-Heart to the messenger announcing the arrival of the stranger at the gates, accompanied by a magnificent retinue; "but it is useless." For the poor King was fast losing all hope of his daughter's case; he was growing aged and careworn before his time.

"Does he know the terms attached to his acceptance?" inquired the Queen.

Yes, the messenger from the unknown candidate for the hand of the beautiful Ice-Heart had been expressly charged to say that the Prince Jocko—such was the newcomer's name—was fully informed as to all particulars, and prepared to comply with the conditions.

The Princess's parents smiled somewhat bitterly. They had no hope, but still they could not forbid the attempt.

"Prince Jocko?" said the King, "not a very princely name. However, it matters little."

A few hours later the royal pair and their daughter, with all their attendants, in great state and ceremony, were awaiting their guest. And soon a blast of trumpets announced his approach. His retinue was indeed magnificent; horsemen in splendid uniforms, followed by a troop of white mules with negro riders in gorgeous attire, then musicians, succeeded by the Prince's immediate attendants, defiled before the great marble steps in front of the palace, at the summit of which the King, with the Queen and Princess, was seated in state.

Ice-Heart clapped her hands.

"'Tis as good as a show," she said, "but where is the Prince?"

As she said the words the cortège halted. A litter, with closely drawn curtains, drew up at the foot of the steps.

"Gracious!" exclaimed the Princess, "I hope he's not a molly-coddle"; but before there was time to say more the curtains of the litter were drawn aside, and in another moment an attendant had lifted out its occupant, who forthwith proceeded to ascend the steps.

The parents and their daughter stared at each other and gasped.

Prince Jocko was neither more nor less than a monkey!

But such a monkey as never before had been seen. He was more comical than words can express, and when at last he stood before them, and bowed to the ground, a three-cornered hat in his hand, his sword sticking straight out behind, his tail sweeping the ground, the

effect was irresistible. King Brave-Heart turned his head aside, Queen Claribel smothered her face in her handkerchief, Princess Ice-Heart opened her pretty mouth wide and forgot to close it again, while a curious expression stole into her beautiful eyes.

Was it a trick?

No; Prince Jocko proceeded to speak.

He laid his little brown paw on his heart, bowed again, coughed, sneezed, and finally began an oration. If his appearance was too funny, his words and gestures were a hundred times more so. He rolled his eyes, he declaimed, he posed and pirouetted like a miniature dancing-master, and his little cracked voice rose higher and higher as his own fine words and expressions increased in eloquence.

And at last a sound—which never before had been heard, save faintly—made everyone start. The Princess was laughing as if she could no longer contain herself. Clear, ringing, merry laughter, which it did one's heart good to hear. And on she went, laughing ever, till—she flung herself at her mother's feet, the tears rolling down her cheeks.

"Oh, Mamma!" she exclaimed, "I never"—and then she went off again.

But Prince Jocko suddenly grew silent. He stepped up to Ice-Heart and, respectfully raising her hand to his lips, gazed earnestly, beseechingly into her face,



Francolin and Sweet-Heart were married, and lived happy ever after.

his own keen sharp eyes gradually growing larger and deeper in expression, till they assumed the pathetic, wistful look of appeal one often sees in those of a noble dog.

"Ah, Princess!" he murmured.

And Ice-Heart stopped laughing. She pressed her hand to her side.

"Father! mother!" she cried, "help me! help me! Am I dying? What has happened to me?" And, with a strange, long-drawn sigh, she sank fainting to the ground.

There was great excitement in the palace, hurrying to and fro, fetching of doctors, and much alarm. But when the Princess had been carried indoors and laid on a couch, she soon revived. And who can describe the feelings of the King and Queen when she turned to them with a smile such as they had never seen on her face before.

"Dearest father, dearest mother," she said, "how I love you! Those strange warm drops that filled my eyes seem to have brought new life to me," and as the Queen passed her arm round the maiden she felt no chill of cold such as used to thrill her with misery every time she embraced her child.

"Sweet-Heart! my own Sweet-Heart!" she whispered.

And the Princess whispered back, "Yes, call me by that name always."

All was rejoicing when the wonderful news of the miraculous cure spread through the palace and the city. But still the parents' hearts were sore, for was not the King's word pledged that his daughter should marry

him who had effected this happy change? And this was no other than Jocko, the monkey!

The Prince had disappeared at the moment that Ice-Heart fainted, and now with his retinue he was encamped outside the walls. All sorts of ideas occurred to the King.

"I cannot break my word," he said, "but we might try to persuade the little monster to release me from it."

But the Princess would not hear of this.

"No," she said. "I owe him too deep a debt of gratitude to think of such a thing. And in his eyes I read more than I can put in words. No, dear father! You must summon him at once to be presented to our people as my affianced husband."

So again the cortège of Prince Jocko made its way to the palace, and again the litter, with its closely drawn curtains, drew up at the marble steps. And Sweet-Heart stood, pale, but calm and smiling, to welcome her ridiculous betrothed.

But who is this that quickly mounts the stairs with firm and manly tread? Sweet-Heart nearly swooned again.

"Jocko?" she murmured. "Where is Jocko? Why, this is Prince Francolin!"

"Yes, dear child," said a bright voice beside her; and, turning round, Sweet-Heart beheld the Western fairy, who, with her sisters, had suddenly arrived.

"Yes, indeed! Francolin, and no other!"

The universal joy may be imagined. Even the grave fairy of the North smiled with pleasure and delight, and, as she kissed her pretty god-daughter, she took the girl's hand and pressed it against her own heart.

"Never misjudge me, Sweet-Heart," she whispered. "Cold as I seem to those who have not courage to approach me closely, my heart, under my icy mantle, is as warm as is now your own."

And so it was.

Where can we get a better ending than the time-honoured one? Francolin and Sweet-Heart were married, and lived happy ever after, and who knows but what, in the kingdom of the Four Orts, they are living happily still?

If only we knew the way thither, we might see for ourselves if it is so!

NEXT DECEMBER.

So you've loved and lost Miranda? Ah, but that is serious—

Can we, if our first love's faithless, ever love again?

No, Sir; far from human haunts in solitude we bury us,

Reading German pessimists to aggravate the pain. Well I know the mischief that one hour on the verandah did,

How she gave you flowers and undoubted cause for hope;

Other girls, you see, have done, Sir, much as your Miranda did;

Other men burn letters to the utmost envelope.

And naught of Miranda will you remember When you marry Nerissa, next December.

Wrote some poems, did you, and a cheque upon the county bank?

Brought the volume out and gave the publisher the cheque?

Up came some reviewer, just a literary mountebank, Took that unoffending volume up and wrung its neck.

Never will you write again—no, not one little triolet; Some may ease their souls with song, but never more will you.

Withered like that blossom of pudicity, the violet, You are dumb for ever, stricken down by that review.

And naught of your failure will you remember When you publish again, Sir, next December.

So your baby boy is dead—the pretty, prettiest boy of all?

Still about the house you go upon your daily tasks,

Taking part in others' joys, though something's hurt the joy of all,

Wearing still the kindly look that thought for others asks.

Yes, you speak not of your sorrow—put it from you, fly from it—

There's so much to do each day and there's no time to weep;

You'll not know your heart was broken till at last you die from it,

As a child scarce knows she's tired until she falls asleep.

You'll have no sorrow to remember Beyond earth's winters next December.

BARRY PAIN.



THE IDEAL.

DRAWN BY F. BARNARD.



R. Taylor & Co.

THE REEL.

DRAWN BY F. BARNARD.



BREAKING UP FOR THE HOLIDAYS.

DRAWN BY LOUIS WAIN.



CHRISTMAS DINNER IN A COUNTRY SHOW.

DRAWN BY LOUIS WAIN.



"No. 10. LANCERS. . . . CAPTAIN FITZ-SPARKLE."—Extract from *Lady Maude's Dance Programme*.
DRAWN BY J. BERNARD PARTRIDGE.



THE COMPLIMENTS OF THE SEASON.

DRAWN BY W. BURTON.

W. Burton



THE MERRY-GO-ROUND.

DRAWN BY A. FORESTIER

PALLINGHURST BARROW



by GRANT ALLEN

RUDOLPH REEVE sat by himself on the Old Long Barrow on Pallinghurst Common. It was a September evening, and the sun was setting. The west was all aglow with a mysterious red light, very strange and lurid—a light that reflected itself in glowing purple on the dark brown heather and the dying bracken. Rudolph Reeve was a journalist and a man of science; but he had a poet's soul for all that, in spite of his avocations, neither of which is usually thought to tend towards the spontaneous development of a poetic temperament. He sat there long, watching the livid hues that incarnadined the sky—redder and fiercer than anything he ever remembered to have seen since the famous year of the Krakatoa sunsets—though he knew it was getting late, and he ought to have gone back long since to the manor-house to dress for dinner. Mrs. Bouverie-Barton, his hostess, the famous Woman's Rights woman, was always such a stickler for punctuality and dispatch, and all the other unfeminine virtues! But, in spite of Mrs. Bouverie-Barton, Rudolph Reeve sat on. There was something about that sunset and the lights on the bracken—something weird and unearthly—that positively fascinated him.

The view over the Common, which stands high and exposed, a veritable waste of heath and gorse, is strikingly wide and expansive. Pallinghurst Ring, or the "Old Long Barrow," a well-known landmark, familiar by that name from time immemorial to all the country-side, crowns its actual summit, and commands from its top the surrounding hills far into the shadowy heart of Hampshire. On its terraced slope Rudolph sat and gazed out, with all the artistic pleasure of a poet or a painter (for he was a little of both) in the exquisite flush of the dying reflections from the dying sun upon the dying heather. He sat and wondered to himself

why death is always so much more beautiful, so much more poetical, so much calmer than life—and why you invariably enjoy things so very much better when you know you ought to be dressing for dinner.

He was just going to rise, however, dreading the lasting wrath of Mrs. Bouverie-Barton, when of a sudden a very weird yet definite feeling caused him for one moment to pause and hesitate. Why he felt it he knew not; but even as he sat there on the grassy tumulus, covered close with short sward of subterranean clover, that curious, cunning plant that buries its own seeds by automatic action, he was aware, through no external sense, but by pure internal consciousness, of something or other living and moving within the barrow. He shut his eyes and listened. No; fancy, pure fancy! Not a sound broke the stillness of early evening, save the drone of insects—those dying insects, now beginning to fail fast before the first chill breath of approaching autumn. Rudolph opened his eyes again and looked down on the ground. In the little boggy hollow by his feet innumerable plants of sundew spread their murderous rosettes of sticky red leaves, all bedewed with viscid gum, to catch and roll round the struggling flies that wrenched their tiny limbs in vain efforts to free themselves. But that was all. Nothing else was astir. In spite of sight and sound, however, he was still deeply thrilled by this strange consciousness as of something living and moving—in or was it moving and dead? Something crawling and creeping, as the long arms of the sundews crawled and crept around the helpless flies, whose juices they sucked out. A weird and awful feeling, yet strangely fascinating! He hated the vulgar necessity for going back to dinner. Why do people dine at all? So material! so common-

place! And the universe all teeming with strange secrets to unfold! He knew not why, but a fierce desire possessed his soul to stop and give way to this overpowering sense of the mysterious and the marvellous in the dark depths of the barrow.

With an effort he roused himself, and put on his hat, which he had been holding in his hand, for his



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forehead was burning. The sun had now long set, and Mrs. Bouverie-Barton dined at 7.30 punctually. He must rise and go home. Something unknown pulled him down to detain him. Once more he paused and hesitated. He was not a superstitious man, yet it seemed to him as if many strange shapes stood by unseen, and watched with great eagerness to see whether he would rise and go away, or yield to the



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temptation of stopping and indulging his curious fancy. Strange!—he saw and heard absolutely nobody and nothing; yet he dimly realised that unseen figures were watching him close with bated breath, and anxiously observing his every movement, as if intent to know whether he would rise and move on, or remain to investigate this causeless sensation.

For a minute or two he stood irresolute; and all the time he so stood the unseen bystanders held their breath and looked on in an agony of expectation. He could feel their outstretched necks; he could picture their strained attention. At last he broke away. "This is nonsense," he said aloud to himself, and turned slowly homeward. As he did so, a deep sigh, as of suspense relieved, but relieved in the wrong direction, seemed to rise—unheard, impalpable, spiritual—from the invisible crowd that gathered around him immaterial. Clutched hands seemed to stretch after him and try to pull him back. An unreal throng of angry and disappointed creatures seemed to follow him over the moor, uttering speechless imprecations on his head, in some unknown tongue—ineffable, inaudible. This horrid sense of being followed by unearthly foes took absolute possession of Rudolph's mind. It might have been merely the lurid redness of the afterglow, or the loneliness of the moor, or the necessity for being back not one minute late for Mrs. Bouverie-Barton's dinner-hour; but, at any rate, he lost all self-control for the moment, and ran—ran wildly, at the very top of his speed, all the way from the barrow to the door of the manor-house garden. There he stopped and looked round with a painful sense of his own stupid cowardice. This was positively childish: he had seen nothing, heard nothing, had nothing definite to frighten him; yet he had run from his own mental shadow, like the veriest schoolgirl, and was trembling still from the profundity of his sense that somebody

unseen was pursuing and following him. "What a precious fool I am," he said to himself, half angrily, "to be so terrified at nothing! I'll go round there by-and-by, just to recover my self-respect, and to show, at least, I'm not really frightened."

And even as he said it he was internally aware that his baffled foes, standing grinning their disappointment with gnashed teeth at the garden-gate, gave a chuckle of surprise, delight, and satisfaction at his altered intention.

II.

There's nothing like light for dispelling superstitious terrors. Pallinghurst Manor-house was fortunately supplied with electric light; for Mrs. Bouverie-Barton was nothing if not intensely modern. Long before Rudolph had finished dressing for dinner, he was smiling once more to himself at his foolish conduct. Never in his life before—at least, since he was twenty—had he done such a thing; and he knew why he'd done it now. It was nervous breakdown. He had been overworking his brain in town with those elaborate calculations for his *Fortnightly* article on "The Present State of Chinese Finances"; and Sir Arthur Boyd, the famous specialist on diseases of the nervous system, had earned three honest guineas cheap by recommending him "a week or two's rest and change in the country." That was why he had accepted Mrs. Bouverie-Barton's invitation to form part of her brilliant autumn party at Pallinghurst Manor; and that was also doubtless why he had been so absurdly frightened at nothing at all just now on the Common. Memorandum: Never to overwork his brain in future; it doesn't pay. And yet, in these days, how earn bread and cheese at literature without overworking it?

He went down to dinner, however, in very good



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spirits. His hostess was kind; she permitted him to take in that pretty American. Conversation with the soup turned at once on the sunset. Conversation with the soup is always on the lowest and most casual plane; it improves with the fish, and reaches its culmination with the sweets and the cheese; after which it declines again to the fruity level. "You were on the barrow about seven, Mr. Reeve," Mrs. Bouverie-Barton observed severely, when he spoke of the after-glow. "You watched that sunset close. How fast you must have walked home! I was almost half afraid you were going to be late for dinner."

Rudolph coloured up slightly; 'twas a girlish trick, unworthy of a journalist; but still he had it. "Oh, dear, no, Mrs. Bouverie-Barton," he answered gravely. "I may be foolish, but not, I hope, criminal. I know better than to do anything so weak and wicked as that at Pallinghurst Manor. I do walk rather fast, and the sunset—well, the sunset was just too lovely."

"Elegant," the pretty American interposed, in her own language:

"It always is, this night every year," little Joyce said quietly, with the air of one who retails a well-known scientific fact. "It's the night, you know, when the light burns bright on the Old Long Barrow."

Joyce was Mrs. Bouverie-Barton's only child—a frail and pretty little creature, just twelve years old, very light and fairylike, but with a strange cowed look which, nevertheless, somehow curiously became her.

"What nonsense you talk, my child!" her mother exclaimed, darting a look at



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Joyce which made her relapse forthwith into instant silence. "I'm ashamed of her, Mr. Reeve; they pick up such nonsense as this from their nurses." For Mrs. Bouverie-Barton was modern, and disbelieved in everything. "Tis a simple creed; one clause concludes it.

But the child's words, though lightly whispered, had caught the quick ear of Archie Cameron, the distinguished electrician. He made a spring upon them at once; for the merest suspicion of the supernatural was to Cameron irresistible. "What's that, Joyce?" he cried, leaning forward across the table. "No, Mrs. Bouverie-Barton, I really *must* hear it. What day is this to-day, and what's that you just said about the sunset and the light on the Old Long Barrow?"

Joyce glanced pleadingly at her mother, and then again at Cameron. A very faint nod gave her grudging leave to proceed with her tale, under maternal disapprobation; for Mrs. Bouverie-Barton didn't carry her belief in Woman's Rights quite so far as to apply them to the ease of her own daughter. We must draw a line somewhere.

Joyce hesitated and began. "Well, this is the night, you know," she said, "when the sun turns, or stands still, or crosses the tropic, or goes back again, or something."

Mrs. Bouverie-Barton gave a dry little cough. "The autumnal equinox," she interposed severely, "at which, of course, the sun does nothing of the sort you suppose. We shall have to have your astronomy looked after, Joyce; such ignorance is exhaustive. But go on with your myth, please, and get it over quickly."

"The autumnal equinox; that's just it," Joyce went on, unabashed. "I remember that's the word, for old Rachel, the gipsy, told me so. Well, on this day every year, a sort of glow comes up on the moor; oh! I know it does, mother, for I've seen it myself; and the rhyme about it goes—

Every year on Michael's night
Pallinghurst Barrow burneth bright.

Only the gipsy told me it was Baal's night before it was St. Michael's; and it was somebody else's night, whose name I forget, before it was Baal's. And the somebody was a god to whom you must never sacrifice anything with iron, but always with flint or with a stone hatchet."

Cameron leaned back in his chair and surveyed the child critically. "Now, this is interesting," he said; "profoundly interesting. For here we get, what is always so much wanted, first-hand evidence. And you're quite sure, Joyce, you've really seen it?"

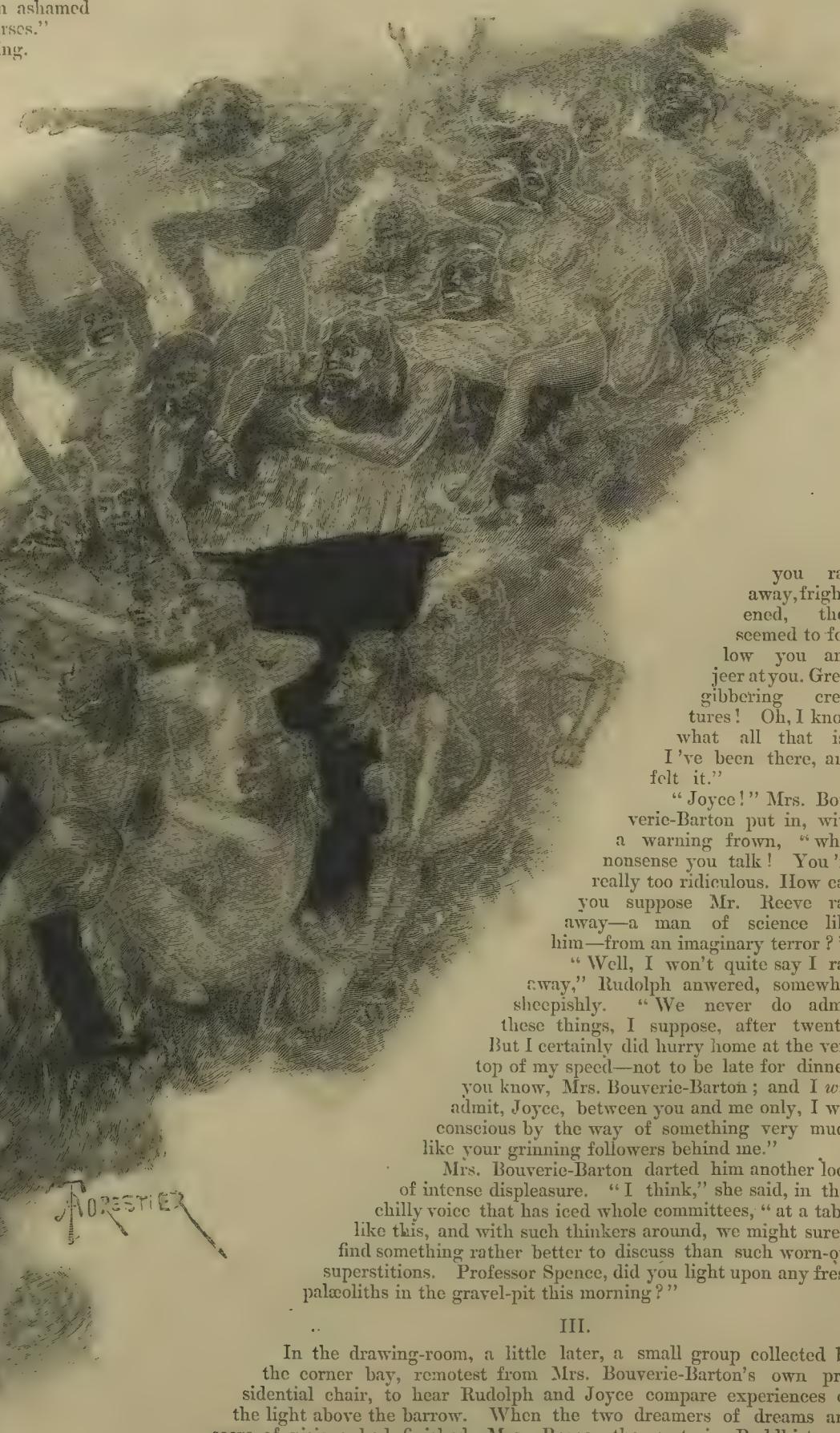
"Oh! Mr. Cameron, how can you?" Mrs. Bouverie-Barton cried, quite pettishly; for even advanced ladies are still feminine enough at times to be distinctly pettish. "I take the greatest trouble to keep all such rubbish out of Joyce's way; and then you men of science come down here and talk like this to her, and undo all the good I've taken months in doing."

"Well, whether Joyce has ever seen it or not," Rudolph Reeve said gravely, "I can answer for it myself that I saw a very curious light on the Long Barrow to-night; and, furthermore, I felt a most peculiar sensation."

"What was that?" Cameron asked, bending over towards him eagerly. For all the world knows that Cameron, though a disbeliever in most things (except the Brush light), still retains a quaint tinge of Highland Scotch belief in a good ghost story.

"Why, as I was sitting on the barrow," Rudolph began, "just after sunset, I was dimly conscious of something stirring inside, not visible or audible, but—

"Oh, I know, I know!" Joyce put in, leaning forward, with her eyes staring curiously; "a sort of a feeling that there was somebody somewhere, very faint and dim, though you couldn't see or hear them; they tried to pull you down, clutching at you like this: and when



you ran away, frightened, they seemed to follow you and jeer at you. Great gibbering creatures! Oh, I know what all that is! I've been there, and felt it."

"Joyce!" Mrs. Bouverie-Barton put in, with a warning frown, "what nonsense you talk! You're really too ridiculous. How can you suppose Mr. Reeve ran away—a man of science like him—from an imaginary terror?"

"Well, I won't quite say I ran away," Rudolph answered, somewhat sheepishly. "We never do admit these things, I suppose, after twenty. But I certainly did hurry home at the very top of my speed—not to be late for dinner, you know, Mrs. Bouverie-Barton; and I will admit, Joyce, between you and me only, I was conscious by the way of something very much like your grinning followers behind me."

Mrs. Bouverie-Barton darted him another look of intense displeasure. "I think," she said, in that chilly voice that has iced whole committees, "at a table like this, and with such thinkers around, we might surely find something rather better to discuss than such worn-out superstitions. Professor Spence, did you light upon any fresh palaeoliths in the gravel-pit this morning?"

III.

In the drawing-room, a little later, a small group collected by the corner bay, remotest from Mrs. Bouverie-Barton's own presidential chair, to hear Rudolph and Joyce compare experiences on the light above the barrow. When the two dreamers of dreams and seers of visions had finished, Mrs. Bruce, the esoteric Buddhist and hostess of Mahatmas (they often dropped in on her, it was said, quite

informally, for afternoon tea) opened the flood-gates of her torrent speech with triumphant vehemence. "This is just what I should have expected," she said, looking round for a sceptic, that she might turn and rend him. "Novalis was right. Children are early men. They are freshest from the truth. They come straight to us from the Infinite. Little souls just let loose from the free expanse of God's sky see more than we adults do—at least, except a few of us. We ourselves, what are we but accumulated layers of phantasmata? Spirit-light rarely breaks in upon our grimed charnel of flesh. The dust of years overlies us. But the child, bursting new upon the dim world of Karma, trails clouds of glory from the beatific

for a human sacrifice. The Piets, you recollect, were a deeply religious people, who believed in human sacrifice. They felt they derived from it high spiritual benefit. And the queerest part of it all is that in order to see the fairies you must go round the barrow *wider-shins*—that is to say, Miss Quackenboss, as Cameron will explain to you, the opposite way from the way of the sun—on this very night of all the year, Michaelmas Eve, which was the accepted old date of the autumnal equinox."

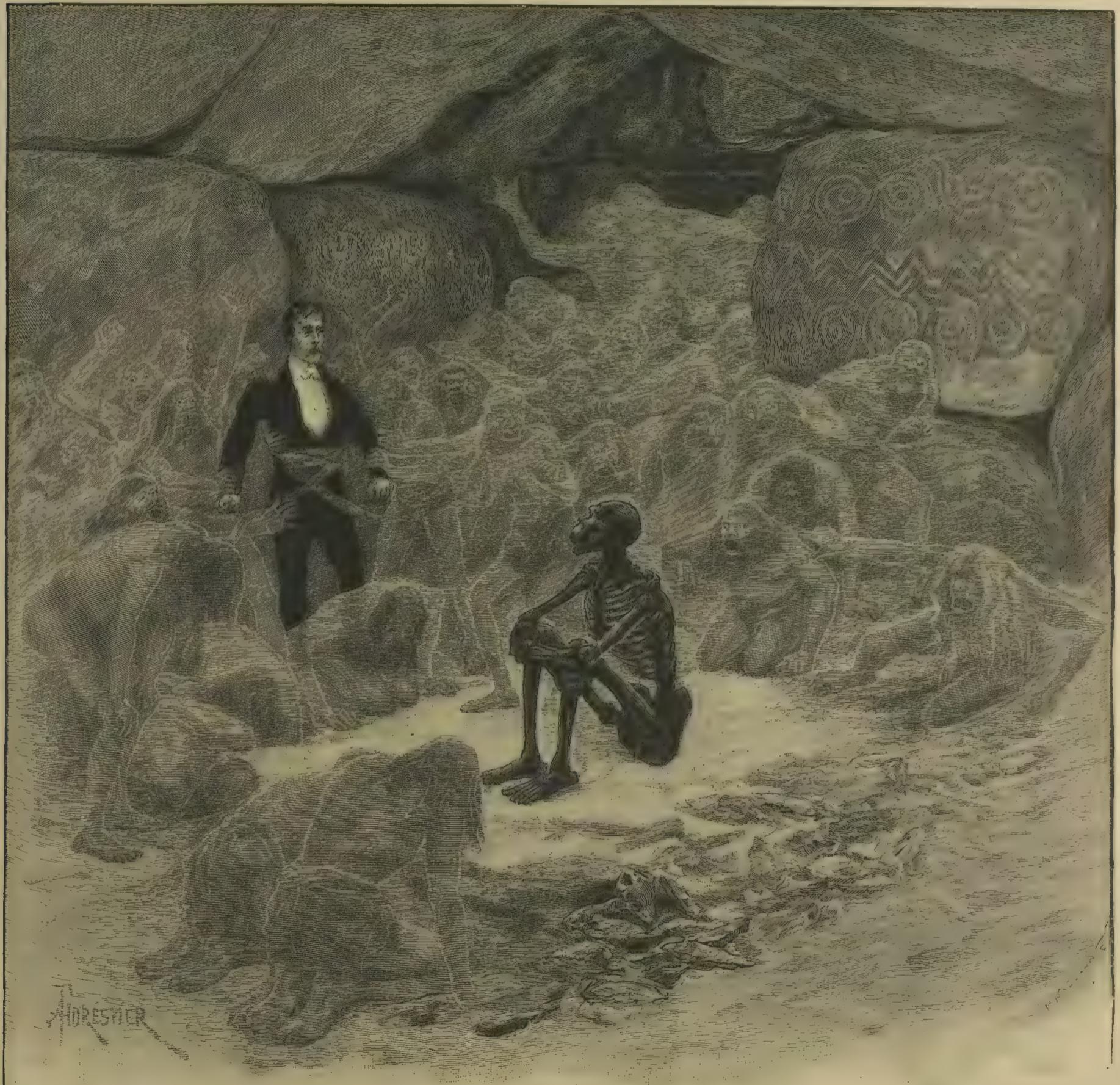
"All long barrows have a chamber of great stones in the centre, I believe," Cameron suggested, tentatively.

"Yes, all or nearly all; megalithic, you know; unwrought; and that chamber's the subterranean

Bruce—as they would avoid prussic acid. Millions of ghosts of remote antiquity must swarm about the world, though, after a hundred years or thereabouts, they retire into obscurity and cease to annoy people with their nasty cold shivers. But the queer thing about these long-barrow ghosts is that they must be the spirits of men and women who died thousands and thousands of years ago, which is exceptional longevity for a spiritual being; don't you think so, Cameron?"

"Europe must be chock-full of them!" the pretty American assented, smiling; "though Amurrica hasn't had time, so far, to collect any considerable population of spirits."

But Mrs. Bruce was up in arms at once against such



The grinning skeleton turned its head and regarded Rudolph from its eyeless orbs with a vacant glance of hungry satisfaction.

vision. So Wordsworth held; so the Masters of Tibet taught us, long ages before Wordsworth."

"It's curious," Professor Spence put in, with a scientific smile, restrained at the corners, "that all this should have happened to Joyee and to our friend Reeve at a long barrow. For you've seen MacRitchie's last work, I suppose? No? Well, he's shown conclusively that long barrows, which are the graves of the small, squat people who preceded the inroad of Aryan invaders, are the real originals of all the fairy hills and subterranean palaces of popular legend. You know the old story of how Childe Roland to the dark tower came, of course, Cameron? Well, that dark tower was nothing more or less than a long barrow; perhaps Pallinghurst Barrow itself, perhaps some other; and Childe Roland went into it to rescue his sister, Burd Ellen, who had been stolen by the fairy king, after the fashion of his kind,

palaces, lit up with the fairy light that's so constantly found in old stories of the dead, and which Joyce and you, alone among moderns, have been permitted to see, Reeve."

"It's a very odd fact," Dr. Porter, the materialist, interposed musingly, "that the only ghosts people ever see are the ghosts of a generation very, very close to them. One hears of lots of ghosts in eighteenth-century costumes, because everybody has a clear idea of wigs and small-clothes from pictures and fancy dresses. One hears of far fewer in Elizabethan dress, because the class most given to beholding ghosts are seldom acquainted with ruffs and farthingales; and one meets with none at all in Anglo-Saxon or Ancient British or Roman costumes, because those are only known to a comparatively small class of learned people; and ghosts, as a rule, avoid the learned—except you, Mrs.

covert levity, and took the field in full force for her beloved spectres. "No, no," she said, "Dr. Porter, there you mistake your subject. You should read what I have written in 'The Mirror of Trismegistus.' Man is the focus of the glass of his own senses. There are other landscapes in the fifth and sixth dimensions of space than the one presented to him. As Carlyle said truly, each eye sees in all things just what each eye brings with it the power of seeing. And this is true spiritually as well as physically. To Newton and Newton's dog Diamond what a different universe! One saw the great vision of universal gravitation, the other saw—a little mouse under a chair, as the wise old nursery rhyme so philosophically puts it. Nursery rhymes summarise for us the gain of centuries. Nothing was ever destroyed, nothing was ever changed, and nothing new is ever created. All the spirits of all that

is, or was, or ever will be, people the universe everywhere, unseen, around us; and each of us sees of them those only he himself is adapted to seeing. The rustic or the clown meets no ghosts of any sort save the ghosts of the persons he knows about otherwise; if a man like yourself saw a ghost at all—which isn't likely—for you starve your spiritual side by blindly shutting your eyes to one whole aspect of nature—you'd be just as likely to see the ghost of a Stone Age chief as the ghost of a Georgian or Elizabethan exquisite."

"Did I catch the word ghost?" Mrs. Bouverie-Barton put in, coming up unexpectedly with her angry glower. "Joyce, my child, go to bed. This is no talk for you. And don't go chilling yourself by standing at the window in your nightdress, looking out on

you give me anything to relieve it?" he asked pitifully, after describing his symptoms.

"Oh, certainly," the doctor answered, with that brisk medical confidence we all know so well. "I'll bring you up a draught that will put that all right in less than half an hour. What Mrs. Bruce calls Soma—the fine old crusted remedy of our Aryan ancestor; there's nothing like it for cases of nervous inanition."

Rudolph went up to his room, and the doctor followed him a few minutes later with a very small phial of a very thick green viscous liquid. He poured ten drops carefully into a measured medicine-glass, and filled it up with water. It amalgamated badly. "Drink that off," he said, with the magisterial air of the cunning leech. And Rudolph drank it.

king's palace. And the third time the door did open; and Childe Roland entered a court, all lighted with a fairy light or gloaming; and then he went through a long passage, till he came at last to two wide stone doors; and beyond them lay a hall—stately, glorious, magnificent—where Burd Ellen sat combing her golden hair with a comb of amber. And the moment she saw her brother, up she stood, and she said—

Woe worth the day, ye luckless fool,
Or ever that ye were born;
For come the King of Eldland in
Your fortune is forlorn.

When Rudolph had read so far his head ached so much he could read no further; so he laid down the book, and reflected once more in some half-conscious mood on Mrs. Bruce's theory that each man could see only the



At that instant he raised his eyes, and, as by a miracle of fate, saw another shadowy form floating vague before him.

the Common to search for the light on the Old Long Barrow, which is all pure moonshine. You nearly caught your death of cold last year with that nonsense. It's always so. These superstitions never do any good to anyone."

And, indeed, Rudolph felt a faint glow of shame himself at having discussed such themes in the hearing of that nervous and high-strung little creature.

IV.

In the course of the evening, Rudolph's head began to ache, as, to say the truth, it often did; for was he not an author? and suffering is the badge of all our tribe. His head generally ached: the intervals he employed upon magazine articles. He knew that headache well; it was the worst neuralgic kind—the wet-towel variety—the sort that keeps you tossing the whole night long without hope of respite. About eleven o'clock, when the men went into the smoking-room, the pain became unendurable. He called Dr. Porter aside. "Can't

"I'll leave you the bottle," the doctor went on, laying it down on the dressing-table, "only use it with caution. Ten drops in two hours if the pain continues. Not more than ten, recollect. It's a powerful narcotic—I daresay you know its name: it's Cannabis Indica."

Rudolph thanked him inarticulately, and flung himself on the bed without undressing. He had brought up a book with him—that delicious volume, Joseph Jacobs's "English Fairy Tales"—and he tried in some vague way to read the story of Childe Roland, to which Professor Spence had directed his attention. But his head ached so much he could hardly read it; he only gathered with difficulty that Childe Roland had been instructed by witch or warlock to come to a green hill surrounded with terrace-rings—like Pallinghurst Barrow—to walk round it thrice, widdershins, saying each time—

Open door, open door,
And let me come in,

and when the door opened to enter unabashed the fairy

ghosts he expected. That seemed reasonable enough, for according to our faith is it unto us always. If so, then these ancient and savage ghosts of the dim old Stone Age, before bronze or iron, must still haunt the grassy barrows under the waving pines, where legend declared they were long since buried; and the mystic light over Pallinghurst moor must be the local evidence and symbol of their presence.

How long he lay there he hardly quite knew; but the clock struck twice, and his head was aching so fiercely now that he helped himself plentifully to a second dose of the thick green mixture. His hand shook too much to be Puritanical to a drop or two. For a while it relieved him; then the pain grew worse again. Dreamily he moved over to the big north oriel to cool his brow with the fresh night air. The window stood open. As he gazed out a curious sight met his eye. At another oriel in the wing, which ran in an L-shaped bend from the part of the house where he had been put, he saw a child's white face gaze appealingly

across to him. It was Joyce, in her white nightdress, peering with all her might, in spite of her mother's prohibition, on the mystic common. For a second she started. Her eyes met his. Slowly she raised one pale forefinger and pointed. Her lips opened to frame an inaudible word; but he read it by sight. "Look!" she said simply. Rudolph looked where she pointed.

A faint blue light hung lambent over the Old Long Barrow. It was ghostly and vague, like matches rubbed on the palm. It seemed to rouse and call him.

He glanced towards Joyce. She waved her hand to the barrow. Her lips said "Go." Rudolph was now in that strange semi-mesmeric state of self-induced hypnotism when a command, of whatever sort or by whomever given, seems to compel obedience. Trembling he rose, and taking his bed-room candle in his hand, descended the stair noiselessly. Then, walking on tip-toe across the tile-paved hall, he reached his hat from the rack, and opening the front door stole out into the garden.

The Soma had steadied his nerves and supplied him with false courage; but even in spite of it he felt a weird and creepy sense of mystery and the supernatural. Indeed, he would have turned back even now, had he not chanced to look up and see Joyce's pale face still pressed close against the window and Joyce's white hand still motioning him mutely onward. He looked once more in the direction where she pointed. The spectral light now burnt clearer and bluer, and more unearthly than ever, and the illimitable moor seemed haunted from end to end by innumerable invisible and uncanny creatures.

Rudolph groped his way on. His goal was the barrow. As he went, speechless voices seemed to whisper unknown tongues encouragingly in his ear; horrible shapes of elder creeds appeared to crowd round him and tempt him with beckoning fingers to follow them. Alone, erect, across the darkling waste, stumbling now and again over roots of gorse and heather, but steadied, as it seemed, by invisible hands, he staggered slowly forward, till at last, with aching head and trembling feet, he stood beside the immemorial grave of the savage chieftain. Away over in the east the white moon was just rising.

After a moment's pause, he began to walk round the tumulus. But something clogged and impeded him. His feet wouldn't obey his will; they seemed to move of themselves in the opposite direction. Then all at once he remembered he had been trying to go the way of the sun, instead of widdershins. Steadying himself, and opening his eyes, he walked in the converse sense. All at once his feet moved easily, and the invisible attendants chuckled to themselves so loud that he could almost hear them. After the third round his lips parted, and he murmured the mystic words: "Open door! Open door! Let me come in." Then his head throbbed worse than ever with exertion and giddiness, and for two or three minutes more he was unconscious of anything.

When he opened his eyes again a very different sight displayed itself before him. Instantly he was aware that the age had gone back upon its steps ten thousand years, as the sun went back upon the dial of Ahaz; he stood face to face with a remote antiquity. Planes of existence faded; new sights floated over him; new worlds were penetrated; new ideas, yet very old, undulated centrically towards him from the universal flat of time and space and matter and motion. He was projected into another sphere and saw by fresh senses. Everything was changed, and he himself changed with it.

The blue light over the barrow now shone clear as day, though infinitely more mysterious. A passage lay open through the grassy slope into a rude stone corridor. Though his curiosity by this time was thoroughly aroused, Rudolph shrank with a terrible shrinking from his own impulse to enter this grim black hole, which led at once, by an oblique descent, into the bowels of the earth. But he couldn't help himself. For, O God! looking round him, he saw, to his infinite terror, alarm, and awe, a ghostly throng of naked and hideous savages. They were spirits, yet savages. Eagerly they jostled and hustled him, and crowded round him in wild groups, exactly as they had done to the spiritual sense a little earlier in the evening, when he couldn't see them. But now he saw them clearly with the outer eye; saw them as grinning and hateful barbarian shadows, neither black nor white, but tawny-skinned and low-browed; their tangled hair falling unkempt in matted locks about their receding foreheads; their jaws large and fierce; their eyebrows shaggy and protruding like a gorilla's; their loins just girt with a few scraps of torn

skin; their whole mien inexpressibly repulsive and bloodthirsty.

They were savages, yet they were ghosts. The two most terrible and dreaded foes of civilised experience seemed combined at once in them. Rudolph Reeve crouched powerless in their intangible hands; for they seized him roughly with incorporeal fingers, and pushed him bodily into the presence of their sleeping chieftain. As they did so they raised loud peals of discordant laughter. It was hollow, but it was piercing. In that hateful sound the triumphant whoop of the Red Indian and the weird mockery of the ghost were strangely mingled into some appalling harmony.

Rudolph allowed them to push him in; they were too many to resist; and the Soma had sucked all strength out of his muscles. The women were the worst: ghastly hags of old, witches with pendent breasts and bloodshot eyes, they whirled round him in triumph, and shouted aloud in a tongue he had never before heard, though he understood it instinctively, "A victim! A victim! We hold him! We have him!"

Even in the agonised horror of that awful moment Rudolph knew why he understood those words, unheard till then. They were the first language of our race—the natural and instinctive mother-tongue of humanity.

They haled him forward by main force to the central chamber, with hands and arms and ghostly shreds of buffalo-hide. Their wrists compelled him as the magnet compels the iron bar. He entered the palace. A dim phosphorescent light, like the light of a churchyard or

the shapes of his jailers. Bit by bit, as he gazed, the skeleton seemed to disappear, or rather to fade into some unsubstantial form, which was nevertheless more human, more corporeal, more horrible than the dry bones it had come from. Naked and yellow like the rest, it wore round its dim waist just an apron of dry grass, or, what seemed to be such, while over its shoulders hung the ghost of a bearskin mantle. As it rose, the other spectres knocked their foreheads low on the ground before it, and grovelled with their long locks in the ageless dust, and uttered elfin cries of inarticulate homage.

The great chief turned, grinning, to one of his spectral henchmen. "Give a knife!" he said curtly, for all that these strange shades uttered was snapped out in short, sharp sentences, and in a monosyllabic tongue, like the bark of jackals or the laugh of the striped hyena among the graves at midnight.

The attendant, bowing low once more, handed his liege a flint flake, very keen-edged, but jagged, a rude and horrible instrument of barbaric manufacture. But what terrified Rudolph most was the fact that this flake was no ghostly weapon, no immaterial shred, but a fragment of real stone, capable of inflicting a deadly gash or long torn wound. Hundreds of such fragments, indeed, lay loose on the concreted floor of the chamber, some of them roughly chipped, others ground and polished. Rudolph had seen such things in museums many times before; with a sudden rush of horror, he recognised now for the first time in his life

with what object the savages of that far-off day had buried them with their dead in the chambered barrows.

With a violent effort he wetted his parched lips with his tongue, and cried out thrice in his agony the one word "Mercy!"

At that sound the savage king burst into a loud and fiendish laugh. It was a hideous laugh, halfway between a wild beast's and a murderous maniac's: it echoed through the long hall like the laughter of devils when they succeed in leading a fair woman's soul to eternal perdition. "What does he say?" the king cried, in the same transparently natural words, whose import Rudolph could understand at once. "How like birds they talk, these white-faced men, whom we get for our only victims since the years grew foolish! 'Mu-mu-mu-moo!' they say; 'Mu-mu-mu-moo!' more like frogs than men and women!"

Then it came over Rudolph instinctively, through the maze of his terror, that he could understand the lower tongue of these elfish visions because he and his ancestors had once passed through it; but they could not understand his, because it was too high and too deep for them.

He had little time for thought, however. Fear bounded his horizon. The ghosts crowded round him, gibbering louder than before. With wild cries and heathen screams they began to dance about

their victim. Two advanced with measured steps and tied his hands and feet with a ghostly cord. It cut into the flesh like the stab of a great sorrow. They bound him to a stake which Rudolph felt conscious was no earthly and material wood but a piece of intangible shadow: yet he could no more escape from it than from the iron chain of an earthly prison. On each side the stake two savage hags, long-haired, ill-favoured, inexpressibly cruel-looking, set two small plants of Enchanter's Nightshade. Then a fierce orgiastic shout went up to the low roof from all the assembled people. Rushing forward together, they covered his body with what seemed to be oil and butter; they hung grave-flowers round his neck; they quarrelled among themselves with clamorous cries for hairs and rags torn from his head and clothing. The women, in particular, whirled round him with frantic Bacchanalian gestures, crying aloud as they circled: "O great chief! O my king! we offer you this victim; we offer you new blood to prolong your life. Give us in return sound sleep, dry graves, sweet dreams, fair seasons!"

They cut themselves with flint knives. Ghostly ichor streamed copious.

The king meanwhile kept close guard over his victim, whom he watched with hungry eyes of hideous cannibal longing. Then, at a given signal, the crowd of ghosts stood suddenly still. There was an awesome pause. The men gathered outside, the women crouched low in a ring close up to him. Dimly at that moment Rudolph noticed almost without noticing it that each of them had a wound on the side of his own skull; and he understood why: they had themselves been sacrificed in the dim long ago to bear their king company to the world of spirits. Even as he thought that thought, the men and women with a loud whoop raised hands aloft in unison. Each grasped a sharp flake, which he



"Well?" she murmured, soft and low, taking her seat by the bedside; "so the King of the Barrow very nearly had you!"

of decaying paganism, seemed to illumine it faintly. Things loomed dark before him; but his eyes almost instantly adapted themselves to the gloom, as the eyes of the dead on the first night in the grave adapt themselves by inner force to the strangeness of their surroundings. The royal hall was built up of cyclopean stones, each as big as the head of some colossal Sesostris. They were of ice-worn granite and a dusky-grey sandstone, rudely piled on one another, and carved in relief with representations of serpents, concentric lines, interlacing zigzags, and the mystic swastika. But all these things Rudolph only saw vaguely, if he saw them at all; his attention was too much concentrated on devouring fear and the horror of his situation.

In the very centre a skeleton sat crouching on the floor in some loose, huddled fashion. Its legs were doubled up, its hands clasped round its knees, its grinning teeth had long been blackened by time or by the indurated blood of human victims. The ghosts approached it with strange reverence, in impish postures.

"See! We bring you a slave, great king!" they cried in the same barbaric tongue—all clicks and gutturals. "For this is the holy night of your father, the Sun, when he turns him about on his yearly course through the stars and goes south to leave us. We bring you a slave to renew your youth. Rise! Drink his hot blood! Rise! Kill and eat him!"

The grinning skeleton turned its head and regarded Rudolph from its eyeless orbs with a vacant glance of hungry satisfaction. The sight of human meat seemed to create a soul beneath the ribs of death in some incredible fashion. Even as Rudolph, held fast by the immaterial hands of his ghastly captors, looked and trembled for his fate, too terrified to cry out or even to move and struggle, he beheld the hideous thing rise and assume a shadowy shape, all pallid blue light, like

brandished savagely. The king gave the signal by rushing at him with a jagged and sawlike knife. It descended on Rudolph's head. At the same moment, the others rushed forward, crying aloud in their own tongue: "Carve the flesh from his bones! Slay him! hack him to pieces!"

Rudolph bent his head to avoid the blows. He cowered in abject terror. Oh! what fear would any Christian ghost have inspired by the side of these incorporeal pagan savages! Ah! mercy! mercy! They would tear him limb from limb! They would rend him in pieces!

At that instant he raised his eyes, and, as by a miracle of fate, saw another shadowy form floating vague before him. It was the form of a man in sixteenth-

energy, though they jostled and hustled him, and struck him again and again with their sharp flint edges. Blood was flowing freely now from his hands and arms—red blood of this world; but still he fought his way out by main force with his sharp steel blade towards the door and the moonlight. The nearer he got to the exit, the thicker and closer the ghosts pressed around, as if conscious that their power was bounded by their own threshold. They avoided the knife, meanwhile, with superstitious terror. Rudolph elbowed them fiercely aside, and lunging at them now and again, made his way to the door. With one supreme effort he tore himself madly out, and stood once more on the open heath, shivering like a greyhound. The ghosts gathered grinning by the open

did, I ought, at least, to have watched its effect more closely. He must be kept very quiet now, and on no account whatever, Nurse, must either Mrs. Bruce or Mrs. Bouverie-Barton be allowed to come near him."

But late in the afternoon Rudolph sent for Joyce.

The child came creeping in with an ashen face. "Well?" she murmured, soft and low, taking her seat by the bedside; "so the King of the Barrow very nearly had you!"

"Yes," Rudolph answered, relieved to find there was somebody to whom he could talk freely of his terrible adventure. "He nearly had me. But how did you come to know it?"

"About two by the clock," the child replied, with white lips of terror, "I saw the fires on the moor



DOROTHY.

century costume, very dim and uncertain. It might have been a ghost—it might have been a vision—but it raised its shadowy hand and pointed towards the door. Rudolph saw it was unguarded. The savages were now upon him, their ghostly breath blew chill on his cheek. "Show them iron!" cried the shadow in an English voice. Rudolph struck out with both elbows and made a fierce effort for freedom. It was with difficulty he roused himself, but at last he succeeded. He drew his pocket-knife and opened it. At sight of the cold steel, which no ghost or troll or imp can endure to behold, the savages fell back, muttering. But 'twas only for a moment. Next instant, with a howl of vengeance even louder than before, they crowded round him and tried to intercept him. He shook them off with wild

vestibule, their fierce teeth, like a wild beast's, confessing their impotent anger. But Rudolph started to run, all wearied as he was, and ran a few hundred yards before he fell and fainted. He dropped on a clump of white heather by a sandy ridge, and lay there unconscious till well on into the morning.

V.

When the people from the Manor-house picked him up next day, he was hot and cold, terribly pale from fear, and mumbling incoherently. Dr. Porter had him put to bed without a moment's delay. "Poor fellow!" he said, leaning over him, "he's had a very narrow escape indeed of a bad brain fever. I oughtn't to have exhibited Cannabis in his excited condition; or, at any rate, if I

burn brighter and bluer: and then I remembered the words of a terrible old rhyme the gipsy woman taught me—

Pallinghurst Barrow—Pallinghurst Barrow!
Every year one heart thou'lt harrow!

Pallinghurst Ring—Pallinghurst Ring!

A bloody man is thy ghostly king.

Men's bones he breaks, and sucks their marrow,
In Pallinghurst Ring on Pallinghurst Barrow;

and just as I thought it, I saw the lights burn terribly bright and clear for a second, and I shuddered for horror. Then they died down low at once, and there was moaning on the moor, cries of despair, as from a great crowd cheated, and at that I knew that you were not to be the Ghost-King's victim."



A CHRISTMAS GREETING.

DRAWN BY E. MORANT COX.



AN OLD-FASHIONED CHRISTMAS STORY.

DRAWN BY LUCIEN DAVIS.

THE LONG SLIDE.

Dedicated, without the least respect, to Lindley Murray.



*The butcher's boy had made a slide in the middle
of the road;
It was the very longest slide that ever mortal slode.*



*The baker's boy espied it, and observed, "Now this is
good.
I'll have a go at that there slide," and subsequently slood.*



*The village patriarch upon the slippery surface
trod;
Most inadvertently and unintentionally he slod.*



*The Misses Smith, though middle-aged, felt
youthful tastes renewed,
Glanced round—saw no one coming—and
started off and slewed;*



*The curate, passing down the street,
remembered that he had
Some skill in sliding as a boy, and
elegantly slad.*



*The doctor followed boldly, with a cry
of "Who's afraid?"
And suffered much from somersaults:
in agony he slade.*



*The constable remarked it. "Well," he said,
"I never did!
I shall be slidin' next myself," which
having said, he slid.*



*At the end of the slide they all came down on a heap of frozen mud,
And sat there, and were sorry that they had ever slud,*

*And did not love the boy who made in the middle of the road
The slide that was the longest slide that ever mortal slode.*



NO REASONABLE OFFER REFUSED.

DRAWN BY PHIL MAY.

THE REV'REND EZEKIEL CRUMP

by
FRANK R. STOCKTON.



IT was one o'clock on a bright October day, and Mr. Nathan Rinkle had just sat down to dinner, with Mrs. Nicely Lent on the other side of the table. The day was warm for the season, and Mr. Rinkle, having been very busy since early morning, had a good appetite. But he had barely made one deep cut into the leg of mutton before him when the door opened, and a boy came in with an old straw hat in his hand. He hesitated for a moment as if he thought he should make some apology for breaking in upon the sanctity of the dinner-hour, and then he said—

"I've just come to tell you that I think the Rev'rend Ezekiel Crump is dyin'. He's all doubled up."

"Gracious!" exclaimed Mr. Rinkle, suddenly pushing back his chair. "I must go out this minute! It's the heat! I didn't count on its bein' so extra warm to-day." And, with this, he clapped on his hat and left the house.

"Oh, dear!" exclaimed Mrs. Lent, as she gazed on the table, which she had arranged with so much care. "I suppose I might as well put these things by the fire to keep 'em warm. There's no knowin' when he'll be back. I wish that boy Joe had kept away until dinner was over. But I suppose it couldn't be helped. It would never do to let the Rev'rend Ezekiel Crump die."

Nathan Rinkle was a florist, and the Rev'rend Ezekiel Crump was a new and fine pelargonium which had been originated by Mr. Rinkle himself, and which he had named after the revered clergyman who had married his father and mother and baptised him. Mr. Rinkle had often said that this good man's name should be given to the finest new flower he should ever grow; and as he did not believe he should produce anything better than this pelargonium, the name was given to it.

Nathan was a tall, slim, muscular bachelor of about forty, industrious, and devoted to his profession, and a respected member of society in the country region in which he lived. Mrs. Lent, a well-nurtured lady, whose age hovered around thirty-five, was the widow of Mr. Rinkle's former partner. The house belonged to Mr. Rinkle, and he, with Joshua Lent and his wife, had lived in it very pleasantly and profitably five or six years. When Joshua died, three years ago this autumn, Nathan was not the man to turn his widow out of doors; so Mrs. Lent, who now owned a certain share of the business, remained as housekeeper and general domestic manager. And thus far the arrangement had been found pleasant and profitable to all parties concerned.

It was half an hour before Mr. Rinkle returned from the greenhouse; and, as Mrs. Lent had seen him coming, the dinner was again on the table when he entered.

"It wasn't as bad as Joe thought it was," he said as he took his seat at the table; "but it was bad enough. I think I have been too careful with that plant, a little too careful. I've been sparin' with the water on it; I didn't want it to bloom too fast. I wanted the three sprays I left on it to be absolutely perfect for the flower-show to-morrow, and I was so busy this mornin' gettin' the other things ready, I didn't look at the Rev'rend Ezekiel; and as he was in a pretty hot place for such a day, and too dry about the roots, he began to wilt. But I think he is all right now; I've given him a good soakin' and put him in the shade, and he began to brighten up before I left him. I tell you, Mrs. Lent, that gave me a real shock."

"As well it might," said the sympathetic Nicely.

That afternoon Mrs. Lent went out to the greenhouses to look at the wonderful new pelargonium. She found the reverend gentleman fully restored to health, strength, and beauty, and she felt quite convinced that never had the eye of man rested upon so grand and glorious a



A more charming girl is seldom seen on a bright October morning.

pelargonium. And, furthermore, there could be no imaginable reason to doubt that on the morrow Mr. Rinkle would receive a first prize.

When Mr. Rinkle, with his lantern, came in from the greenhouses that evening, he told Mrs. Lent that he should go out several times during the night to see if everything was all right, and that he should leave very early in the morning for the town, about ten miles away, where the flower-show was to be held. "I'm goin' to send Joe off with one wagon at daylight; and then, as soon as I can get off, I shall follow with the other wagon, which won't be more than half full, so I'm goin' to stop at the Widow Sharp's and take along the plants she's got to show, for she hasn't any way of gettin' them there herself."

"Do you mean," asked Nicely, somewhat anxiously, "that you are going before breakfast?"

"Oh, yes," said Nathan; "and, as I've got to stop at the Widow Sharp's anyway, I'll breakfast there."

"And I suppose, of course, that you'll take the Rev'rend Ezekiel Crump with you?"

"Oh, yes, indeed!" answered Nathan. "You may be sure that I'll take charge of that plant. That pelargonium is goin' to make a commotion at the show, I can tell you! I've got a lot of young plants of it, but I didn't expect I'd have one in bloom this year. This one is a little spindlin', it is true, but he has got three sprays of flowers which are finer than anybody has ever yet seen on a pelargonium plant."

"I am so glad," said Mrs. Lent, "that you are able to exhibit it so much sooner than you expected to. That ought to be a good thing for you."

"I've no doubt it will be," said Nathan, taking up his candle. "I'll leave Gottlieb Stein in charge of the greenhouses to-morrow, and I'll tell him to come up to the house now and then, to see if you want anything. He'll come to work at seven o'clock, and I'll see him before I go. Good-night."

In the early dawn of the next morning the boy Joe started for the show with the grey mare and a well-loaded wagon; and at seven Nathan Rinkle began to be impatient for the coming of his chief assistant, Gottlieb Stein, who lived about a mile away. He wanted him to put the brown horse to the covered wagon, in a back corner of which the Rev'rend Ezekiel Crump was to travel, carefully protected from the cool morning air; and he had many directions to give his assistant for the conduct of the establishment during the day. It was seldom that Gottlieb was late in coming to his work, and Nathan was much annoyed that he should happen to be so on this most important occasion.

After fuming and fretting for at least a quarter of an hour, as he walked up and down the principal greenhouse gathering together the plants he intended to take to the show, the thought struck him that possibly Gottlieb might have forgotten what was to be the great business of the day, and had gone to work in some of the other houses. So he hastily ran out to look for him. Nathan opened the doors of two other greenhouses, looked in and called; but the man was not in either of them; then he ran over to the violet-house, which was newer than the other buildings, and at some distance from them. Mr. Rinkle did not find here the man he wanted to see, but he found something he did not want to see, and that was that a number of the violet beds were very much in need of water.

"Confound it!" he ejaculated. "Here is a piece of forgetfulness! And while I am waiting for that fellow I might as well be freshening up these beds." And, taking up a watering-pot he proceeded to the cistern.

This reservoir, supplied with rain water from the roof, was simply a wide hole in the central part of the house, about nine feet deep. It had been dug in a bed of clay, and the inside of it had not yet been walled-up or cemented, for as Mr. Rinkle had found that its clay sides and bottom were impervious to water, and it made a very good cistern as it was, for the present he had postponed finishing it. As the cistern was yet uncovered, no pump had been placed in it, and Gottlieb

had not come up to the top of the rubber overshoes which he wore to protect the well-blacked boots he had put on for the flower-show. The season had been dry, and but little rain had run into the cistern, and it might be that the difficulty of dipping with a bucket in two or three inches of water would explain Gottlieb's remissness in the matter of watering the violets.

Nathan's first impulse was to wade around the sides of the cistern and endeavour to find some means of climbing out. This was instinctively natural, but impossible. The walls, although not quite perpendicular, were smooth and slippery.

Then, at the top of his voice, Nathan began to call for help, but, after indulging in this exercise for some time, he was forced to admit to himself that it was useless. The door of the violet-house was shut, and, as it was at a considerable distance from any other building, it was not at all likely he could make anybody hear him until Gottlieb, not finding his employer anywhere else, should come to that building to look for him.

Nathan's anger more than filled the cistern. He was not a swearing man, but if the dilatory Gottlieb could have heard the threats of his employer, and could have seen the clenched fist he shook in the air, he would probably have been afraid to go to his assistance. But as he could do nothing but wait, Nathan thought he might as well wait as comfortably as possible, so he laid hold of the bucket, and, turning it bottom upwards, sat down upon it. He drew his coat-tails over his knees, and, as his feet were protected by his overshoes, he was enabled to sit thus without getting wet.

It was not cold in the cistern, for the air was tempered by the greenhouse atmosphere above, and, although it was very damp, Mr. Rinkle did not mind that. He had passed so many years of his life in moist glasshouses, going from their heat into the cold and dampness of the outer air without any change of clothing, that his skin had become tough and hardened, and he never thought of such a thing as taking cold. As he sat thus and considered his misfortunes, he was still very angry, but he did not despair. Even if Gottlieb did not make his appearance until eight o'clock, it would still be time enough for him to start with his flowers for the show; and so he sat and sat until, as his sleep had been very much broken the night before, he fell into a doze. With his hands folded in his lap, and his chin on his breast, he slept as he had done during the night watches in his greenhouses.

While Mr. Rinkle slept, Mrs. Nicely Lent was at work in her kitchen. She was a pleasant-looking woman of a cheerful temperament, and yet as she worked she heaved a little sigh. Her breakfast was over, and she was preparing the mince-meat for the first mince-pie of the season, and was doing it with great care, for Mr. Rinkle was fond of mince-pies, and would gladly welcome this unexpected harbinger of the season of good eating.

Moreover, it was Mrs. Lent's birthday, and she saw no better way of celebrating it than in making something good for Mr. Rinkle. It was quite certain that no one would think of making anything good for her. In no way was it a very joyful anniversary, for it is lonelier to be lonely on one's birthday than on any other day. Even her little maid, Elizabeth, was absent on a visit to her parents, and Gottlieb, whose own good



"I've just come to tell you that I think the Rev'rend Ezekiel Crump is dyin'. He's all doubled up."

had found it easy enough to draw water from it by means of a bucket and rope. So now, as he had to take Gottlieb's place, Nathan Rinkle crouched down to the edge of the cistern and lowered the bucket. Gottlieb Stein was a heavy-footed man, and had crouched at that spot so often that the earth was a little depressed, and inclined cisternward, and Mr. Rinkle's overshoes, being wet with the morning dew, were slippery. In consequence, before the bucket was halfway down, Mr. Rinkle slipped into the cistern himself and arrived with a great splash at the bottom. Plunged thus suddenly into darkness and water, the good gardener's surprise almost took away his breath. Fortunately, he came down in a standing position, and as soon as he was able to command his senses he discovered that, although a good deal jarred, he had not been hurt. He also discovered, to his great surprise, that the water was very low, and that it did

nature—even if Mr. Rinkle had not told him to do so—should have prompted him to come to the house to see if he were needed, had not made his appearance.

"I suppose," thought Mrs. Lent, "that Mr. Rinkle had a good breakfast at Mrs. Sharp's, for she expected him, and it may be—for she is quite forward enough for that sort of thing—that she has persuaded him to take her to the flower-show." And here there came a little sigh. "But if he's done that, he's done it," she reflected, "and there's no help for it. But I shall put off dinner, and won't have it till he comes home. And then he shall have his mince-pie, nice and hot as he likes it."

She was turning over the mince-meat with a fork, looking for such pieces of suet as might be large enough to be picked out. "Mince-pies do not agree with him very well," she said to herself, "but he is very fond of them, and I will take out as much suet as I can, and put in a little more brandy. I don't think he will notice it, and it will make them more wholesome."

Her fork now brought up a large raisin, and she held it for a moment, thinking it might be better to cut it in half before putting it back. Mr. Rinkle was very fond of raisins, but to agree with him they ought to be thoroughly cooked. Nicely Lent was a woman who had tender sympathies and pleasant memories, and as she sat with the raisin still upon her fork she thought of other birthdays that had been so different from this. She did not mind on ordinary mornings being left alone in the house, but this morning it was indeed depressing to be here without a soul to speak to her. She could imagine Mr. Rinkle in all the brightness and gladness of the flower-show: she could hear the delighted admiration provoked by the Rev'rend Ezekiel Crump, in whom she felt almost a maternal pride; and she thought, with a pang, that perhaps the Widow Sharp was at that moment making herself officious by dilating to the bystanders upon the merits of this grand pelargonium. And here was she, sitting alone in her kitchen! As she thought thus a large tear trickled down her cheek and dropped upon the raisin.

This aroused her to a sense of the present. It would not do to put a raisin that had been cried upon into a pie, and she was about to throw it away. But she hesitated. That tear had been evoked by sweet memories of the past; it seemed like a sacrilege to throw it away. She took the raisin gently from the fork, and, going to the window, made a little hole in the mould of a pot of mignonette which Mr. Rinkle had given her, and buried the raisin therein. It suited her to think that the little rootlets of the mignonette would take up that tear. She put her nose to the delicate blossoms of the plant, and then she returned to her work.

If Mrs. Lent had known that the day before had been Gottlieb Stein's birthday, and that he was now in bed at home sleeping off the effects of a late supper, which, in honour of the anniversary, he had given to some chosen friends, she would have hastened to the greenhouses to see if they needed any attention in regard to warmth or ventilation; and she would have discovered Mr. Rinkle's sorry plight, and her hands would have borne him a ladder.

If Mr. Rinkle had known of Gottlieb's birthday supper and its consequences, he would not so frequently and with such drowsy content have renewed his naps, thinking each time that he half opened his eyes that they had been closed but for a minute or two, and not imagining that his nature was repaying itself the several hours of sleep of which he had deprived it the night before.

It was nearly noon when, along a path which led from a handsome house upon a hillside half a mile away, a young lady appeared, walking briskly towards the Rinkle greenhouses. A more charming girl is seldom seen on a bright October morning, or, indeed, upon any other morning.

At the same time there walked along the crest of the hills on the other side of the narrow valley in which the greenhouses lay a young man with a stout stick under his arm, who had started out for a long country tramp. But as he turned his head to gaze on the bright autumnal scenery beneath him, he suddenly stopped.

"Upon my word," he exclaimed aloud, "I believe that is Clara! Yes, truly it is she! She is going down to Nathan Rinkle's greenhouses. What glorious good luck! I wonder if I can get there before her!"

"Oh, I will go and look for him," said she, "but don't let me trouble you, Mr. Hapfield."

"Trouble!" he exclaimed. "As if it were possible!" And they went out together.

Young Leonard Hapfield was not the avowed lover of Miss Knightley, but the only reason for this was that he had never yet had an opportunity of avowing his passion for her. He had adored her for what seemed to him a very long time, but never in her father's mansion on the hill, on the tennis grounds, or in the houses of friends had he found the moment he had longed for. Now it seemed to him that it had come. He would have been glad to open his heart to her in that quiet greenhouse among the flowers, but she was in such a hurry to leave it that she gave him no time.

The two now entered the next greenhouse, but they found no one. Leonard was in favour of waiting there until someone came, but Clara would not agree to that; she thought it better to go and find someone.

They now went into the principal greenhouse, and near the door stood a number of plants covered with beautiful blossoms, and eminent among these was the Rev'rend Ezekiel Crump.

Clara was a great lover of flowers. "What a perfectly beautiful pelargonium that is!" she exclaimed. "Oh, if I could have one of those sprays! I wish I could find someone to attend to me!"

"I don't think Mr. Rinkle or any of his men are here," said Leonard, after walking to the other end of the house and calling several times, "but here is someone who can attend to you. Let me cut off this spray and give it to you? I shall be so glad to do it," and he took a knife from his pocket.

"Oh, no, no!" exclaimed Clara, stretching out her hand towards him. "You must not do it! I am sure that is a rare flower, and very likely Mr. Rinkle intends to take it to the flower-show at Marston, which opens today."

"Oh, no!" said Leonard, quite confidently. "He has taken his flowers there long before this. I have no doubt he had a lot of this sort of pelargonium—more than he wanted—and he has left this one."

Clara was examining the flower with great interest. "I must find out about this," she said. "I never saw anything like it! Just look at this spray with five great blossoms on it, each of them nearly three inches in diameter! And what exquisite blending of crimson, pink, and cream! I wonder what it is called?" She stooped and read the name of the plant, which was written on a wooden label stuck into the earth of the pot. "How utterly absurd!"

she exclaimed, laughing. "This perfectly beautiful thing is named 'The Rev'rend Ezekiel Crump'!"

She laughed again, and Leonard laughed with her. But he did not intend to waste his time in merriment; his mind was bent on earnest work. Here was a chance to speak which he must not lose.

"Miss Knightley," he said, "if you will accept from me this new and most beautiful flower it will give me a pleasure as new and beautiful as—"

"Oh, you mustn't do it!" she cried. "Don't touch it, please! I must ask Mr. Rinkle about it, or his man if he isn't here." And, without further words, she turned and left the house.

Leonard followed her, disappointed and annoyed. Miss Knightley's abrupt manner showed him that she did not wish to give him the opportunity to speak to her of the new and beautiful pleasure to which he had alluded. But he did not intend to give up the attempt, and he was quickly at her side.

(Continued on page 29.)



"Don't you do it!" screamed Mr. Rinkle, springing to his feet.

There was really no doubt upon this subject, for the young man ran down the hill, vaulted over a fence, crossed a brook, and, hurrying through the Rinkle apple orchard, reached the nearest greenhouse in a surprisingly short time. He had been there for nearly five minutes, walking up and down, smelling some flowers without perceiving their scent, and looking at others without noticing their colour, when the door opened and the young lady entered. His astute mind had rightly divined that she would go into the house first reached by the path.

With outstretched hand he advanced to meet her, and took no pains to conceal his delight in doing so. She was surprised, and all the prettier for that.

"I have come," she said, as she offered him her hand, "to get this basket filled with flowers. But Mr. Rinkle is not here, I believe?"

"No," said the young man; "will you wait for him here, or shall we go and look for him?"

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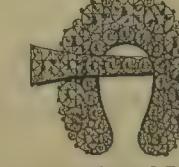
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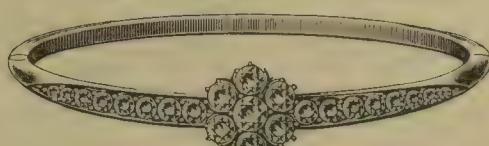
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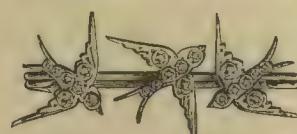
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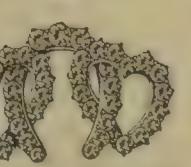
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See outside of Cover.]

J. Redwood, Ph.D., F.I.C., F.C.S.

"There is only one other place where they can be," she said; "they must be in the violet-house."

Leonard did not wish to hurry to the violet-house or to any other house where they might expect to find people.

"Miss Knightley," said he, "suppose we go there by this broad walk, which leads round the gardens. That footpath is very narrow, and may be wet."



"May I love you?"

"Oh! this leads straight to the house," said she, "and that goes ever so far around." And she immediately took the narrow footpath.

When following a lady along a path wide enough only for one, and bordered by tall grass and bushes, it is not often convenient to propose marriage to her, especially if she be walking very fast. But Leonard followed Miss Knightley resolutely. If it were necessary, he would walk home with her. This day he would certainly finish what he had begun to say to her.

"I declare," said Miss Knightley, when she had proceeded nearly to the middle of the violet-house, "there is nobody here! I certainly expected to find someone in this place."

"And most happy am I," said Leonard, stepping close to her, "that there is nobody here, for this gives me a chance to tell you, Clara, that I love you: for with all my heart and soul I have long loved you, and I cannot wait any longer to tell you so." In his excitement, he took hold of her left hand, her right being occupied with her basket.

Mr. Rinkle had awakened when he heard the door of the violet-house open. In an instant he was sitting up alert, and with every sense at its sharpest.

"It must be after eight o'clock," he said to himself, "and that rascal has just come! I'll pay him well for this! But I'll wait till he comes nearer, and first give him a good fright."

Prepared to give a howl which might come from a wild demon of the depths, Nathan sat, leaning forward, and ready to spring to his feet when the miscreant Gottlieb should be near enough. But suddenly his mood changed. "There are the footsteps of two persons," he thought, "and I hear the rustling of a dress. One must be a woman." Then, hearing Clara's exclamation, his heart sank. "It is Miss Knightley," he said to himself, "and someone with her. Oh, dear me! I must not let them know I am here! If she should go home and tell her father she found me down a cistern and not able to get out, I'd never hear the end of it. He'd laugh at me as long as he lives." So, crouching down as low as possible, Mr. Rinkle remained perfectly quiet, hoping that these untimely visitors might soon leave the house. But the next moment he heard Leonard's avowal of his love.

"My conscience!" thought Nathan, holding his breath in amazement. "It's that young Hapfield making love to her! How very embarrassing! Oh, dear! oh, dear! It would be awful if they knew I was so close to them!" But, in spite of his embarrassment, Nathan did not put his fingers in his ears. His heart had never beat so quickly; he had never been more interested.

Leonard continued: "Clara," he said, speaking

earnestly and rapidly, "may I love you? Can I hope that you will love me? Oh! do not think of going away. There is nothing in the world so important as what I am saying to you."

Clara had looked towards the door, but whether she contemplated a retreat to it, or whether she glanced through its glass panes in the fear that someone might be approaching, Leonard could not tell; but she saw no one, and it was impossible to retreat, so tightly was her hand held. She turned her head from the door, and bent her eyes on the ground.

"Oh, Clara!" he exclaimed; "will you not speak to me? Will you not look at me?"

She did not speak, but she looked up at him. That was enough.

"How very embarrassing!" thought Mr. Rinkle, his ears expanding like opening Calla lilies and his heart beating faster in his excited interest. "She must have agreed, for they surely are kissin'. Yes, I can hear 'em! and, most likely, huggin'! Mercy on me! It's lucky they don't know I'm here. How dreadful it would be if they should even hear me breathe!" And, as this thought came to him, he pressed his lips tightly together.

"Oh, happy, happy day!" cried Leonard. "Oh, glorious world! Oh, darling Clara!—my own for ever!"

"Dear me! dear me!" thought Mr. Rinkle. "How warmed up he is! And I don't wonder—I don't wonder—if he really is holdin' her in his arms. Yes, he must be! That was another kiss."

Some Calla lilies are so large that it was impossible for Mr. Rinkle's ears to rival their dimensions, but they did their best.

"And you really are mine—for ever and always?" asked the ardent lover.

And into the violet-perfumed air of the greenhouse there was breathed the one word: "Yes."

"There!" thought Mr. Rinkle, "that is the first thing she's said! But, to be sure, he hasn't given her much chance. What! Again and again! I almost wish they would go away. This is getting to be very embarrassing."

"Come, darling," said Leonard, "let us go. And nothing shall now prevent my giving that loveliest flower to the loveliest woman on earth. It shall be my first present to her, and a fit one. She shall carry home my love, and with it the finest spray of blossoms from the Rev'rend Ezekiel Crump."

"Don't you do it!" screamed Mr. Rinkle, springing to his feet. "Don't you touch it! I'm going to take that flower to the show. I wouldn't have it spoiled for the world."

There was a scream from Clara, a shout from Leonard. Then the young lady began to tremble, and sat down on the floor. Her lover assisted her to lean back against one of the supports of the violet beds, and then, seeing that she had not really fainted, he sprang to the open mouth of the cistern. There, a little below the surface of the floor, he saw the pale face of Mr. Rinkle, who was standing on the bucket.

"I beg a thousand pardons, Mr. Hapfield," said the trembling florist, dismayed at what he had done, "and I vow to you that I wouldn't have heard a word you've been sayin' if it had been possible for me to sink any deeper into the bowels of the earth. There is a ladder at the far end of the greenhouse, and if you'll put that down here, Mr. Hapfield, I'll come up and tell you all about it."

Leonard was so amazed, so shocked, and so angry that he could find no words in which to reply to this apparition in the cistern, but he brought the ladder, and very soon the florist was standing before him and Clara, who had now risen to her feet.

"This is very embarrassing," said Mr. Rinkle, his hands clasped before him.

"Now, then," cried Leonard fiercely, "none of that nonsense! I got you out to hear what you had to say about this contemptible, sneaking piece of business."

Mr. Rinkle looked first at the angry young man, and then at the pale Clara, and told everything just as it had happened. "You see," said he, in conclusion, "I kept so very quiet, thinking to frighten Gottlieb, that you two began speakin' in a way that might be called confidential before I had time to let you know there was someone else in the greenhouse; and then I didn't like to speak out because I knew it would embarrass you so dreadfully, and I felt at any moment you might be on the p'int of goin' away. As for me, I assure you I was never so embarrassed since the beginning of my days!"

"Look here!" exclaimed Leonard. "I want to know if you heard everything we said?"

"Oh, no, indeed!" replied the good Nathan. "There were times when I couldn't hear a word. You see I was at the very bottom of the cistern. But, of course, I couldn't help understandin' the drift of the conversation, which seemed in a way to betoken that you two was engaged to be married."

Miss Knightley, whose colour had come back to her

face, looked at Leonard. He looked at her, and they both laughed.

Mr. Rinkle saw his opportunity, and extended a hand to each. "Let me congratulate you," he said, "and I beg from the bottom of my heart that you won't mind an old fellow like me gettin' by the merest accident a hint of your engagement before anybody else. And you may trust me for never sayin' a word to a livin' soul about it; as far as that goes, it might have been one of them pots that was down the cistern."

There was a moment of silence, and Clara was the first to speak.

"It is dreadfully embarrassing, as you say, Mr. Rinkle; but it can't be helped now, and I am willing to forgive you. But you must promise not only not to mention our engagement until we are ready ourselves to announce it, but that you will never—never to the end of your days—mention to a living soul that you were anywhere near at the time it was made."

"Oh, bless me!" cried Mr. Rinkle. "I'll never do that. It would make me the laughing-stock of the county!"

"If I ever hear," said Leonard, "that this has leaked out, I shall make it my business that the people in this neighbourhood shall never go into one of your greenhouses without sending someone ahead to see who is in the cistern."

"Oh! you need have no fears of that," said Nathan. "And now you must excuse me for leaving you so abruptly; I must hurry off to the flower-show. I haven't my watch with me, but it must be a good deal after eight o'clock."

"After eight!" exclaimed Leonard, taking out his watch. "It is half-past twelve."

Mr. Rinkle stood aghast. "I must have slept the whole morning!" he said woefully. "And that settles me at the flower-show! The prizes were to be given out at noon to-day while things are fresh, and there is no use in my thinking of going there at this time. It is all up with me and my exhibition; at least, the best part of it."

An idea suddenly struck the florist. "Stay here, please," he said, "I'll be back in a minute." And he ran out of the house.

In a short time he returned bearing in his hand the largest spray of blossoms from the Rev'rend Ezekiel Crump. "It's no use lettin' 'em stay on till they're withered," he said, "and as the plant can't enter for a prize now, I'll let you, Mr. Hapfield, do what you wanted to do, and give your lady a flower that no other lady ever had before. If you knew how I'd worked and waited to get those blossoms, you'd know the value of them."

This extinguished the last sparks of resentment in



"May I love you?"

Leonard's mind, and Mr. Rinkle considerably absented himself during the presentation of the flowers.

It was evening; dinner was over; and Mr. Rinkle pushed back his chair with an air of great content. At his hasty luncheon, which he ate standing and in a perturbation of mind quite natural after what had happened, he had merely stated to Mrs. Lent that he had not gone to the flower-show because Gottlieb had

not come to take charge. But now, during the dinner, he had given Mrs. Lent a full account of his misadventure, alluding to his rescue from the cistern only by saying that Mr. Hapfield had happened to come into the violet-house and had helped him out.

"That was a wonderfully good mince-pie, Mrs. Lent," he remarked in his after-dinner serenity. "There was never a better."

"If I had only known," said Mrs. Lent, "that while I was making it you were down in that dreadful hole, how fast I would have run to you!"

Mr. Rinkle crossed his legs and smiled. He was in a state of great good-humour. "I know you would, Mrs. Lent, I know you would; but, after all, perhaps it's just as well you didn't come."

She looked surprised. "Don't you think I could have helped you out as well as anybody?"

"Of course you could. I wasn't thinkin' of that," said Nathan, walking up and down the floor and still smiling. Suddenly he struck his hands together, and then he took his hat from its peg. "Mrs. Lent," said he, "don't clear away the dinner things. I'll be back in a minute."

When he returned he brought with him the second largest spray of flowers from the Rev'rend Ezekiel Crump, bearing four great blossoms. "Nicely," said he, "allow me to present to the loveliest woman on earth the loveliest flower—at least, of the pelargonium family—that was ever grown by man."

Mrs. Lent stood up amazed. Never before had he called her Nicely; and what did he mean by bringing her that almost sacred flower? "I don't understand," she gasped.

"Nicely," he said, "May I love you? Will you love me in return? Come, now, don't look down, or think about doing kitchen work. There is nothing so important as what I am saying to you."

She understood now. Flushing and trembling, she could not speak, but she looked up at him, and that was enough. As for Nathan, he forgot nothing of the lesson he had learned.

It was an hour afterwards. The room was in order, and the two were sitting before the fire. He had just finished giving her a full account of the interview he had overheard between Miss Knightley and Mr. Hapfield. "Of course I wouldn't have told you," he said, "so long as we were merely two good friends, but now we are the same as one, I couldn't help tellin' you. It's your right to know all I know."

The widow was so well aware of Nathan's desire to tell things about people that a faint suspicion came into her mind that perhaps he had proposed to her because there was no other way in which he could justify himself in telling her this wonderful bit of news. But she dismissed the thought as an unworthy one.

"After all," exclaimed the jubilant Nathan, "the Rev'rend Ezekiel Crump brought me a prize—he brought me you!"

Mrs. Lent looked at him inquiringly.

"What had he to do with it?" she asked.

He turned a beaming face towards her.

"Nicely," said he, "if them two had gone away without knowing I was in the cistern, and I'd had to wait till Gottlieb came and got me out—and that rascal

didn't show himself till two o'clock this afternoon—there'd been a fight; and, as he's a big fellow and I'd been a fiery mad one, I wouldn't have been in a fit state this day to make love to anybody. But it was the name of the Rev'rend Ezekiel Crump that brought me bouncin' to my feet and got me out of that hole, while I was in such a state of mind from hearin' what I heard and thinkin' about what I imagined that I was all one tingle of glowin' excitement from my head, that was in the air, to my feet, that were in the water, and I kept thinkin' and thinkin' about it till early in the afternoon I made up my mind that, as soon as I could get the day's work done and dinner was over, I wouldn't wait any longer to declare my love—just as young Hapfield couldn't wait any longer to declare his."

"Nathan," said she, "did hearin' those two talk put this disposition into you?"

He threw one arm over the back of her chair. "No, Nicely," he answered, "it only brought it out."

The next day Mr. Rinkle went to the flower-show dressed in his best clothes and wearing in his button-hole the remaining spray of blossoms from his new pelargonium. His brother florists stared with amazement at his adornment.

"If you had brought yesterday the plant that bore that flower," one of them exclaimed, "you would have gained a first prize."

"Oh! I got prize enough," said Nathan, with an air of superiority to floricultural distinctions, "and the Rev'rend Ezekiel Crump must wait till next year for his turn."

THE CULMINATING POINT.

BY BARRY PAIN.

MR. WILLIAM CLARK sat at the end of one of the four long and narrow tables in the dining-room of Mr. Summers-Howson's private and preparatory school for the sons of gentlemen. On the elegant gate of the school "The Grange" was painted in white letters: in the town it was generally known as "Summasowson's." The merest glance at the gardeners, and grounds, and grandeur of the place would have told anyone that the school was a success. Summers-Howson took sixty boarders. William Clark was at present engaged in carving slices of roast beef for such of the sixty as sat at his table: he was the only resident assistant master, the rest were all non-resident. At another table Summers-Howson himself, a man of far more magnificent presence, was also carving industriously with a much better carving-knife; at the sideboard the butler, who alone knew the merits of his own carving-knife, had no trouble at all with a particularly tough leg of mutton. The windows of the dining-room gave it rather an ecclesiastical appearance. Neat servants in white caps and aprons moved busily to and fro. The clink of knives and forks was just beginning to break through the chatter of the boys. An observer might also have noted the strong smell of hot meat and vegetables, and the presence of two of the visiting masters—a Frenchman with poetical eyes and a good appetite, and an insignificant little person who suffered from the profession of music-teacher. One master sat at one end of each table, Mrs. Summers-Howson sat at the other end of her husband's table.

Summers-Howson had by nature a magnificent presence; he also possessed some commercial abilities, and the confident ignorance of a Cambridge poll-degreed; he was no scholar, and he was a bully. He had been wise in his choice of William Clark as an assistant master. He had started life with some capital

and a very fair connection. Fortune favoured him. His hyphenated name made it natural that he should refuse all pupils but the sons of gentlemen. He had all the advantages that William Clark had missed. Clark was a fair scholar, and that is always a drawback. To be an excellent scholar is to have confidence: to be a fair scholar is to be diffident, and Clark was diffident. When you get down to the man with no scholarship at all, you find the confidence commencing again. Clark had neither capital nor connection; he had no near relations, and the friendships which he had formed

able to stand the dictatorial manner of Summers-Howson. He wondered whether Summers-Howson himself did not find the supervision and limitation of the appetites of those who dined at the same table with him a humiliation that could not be rendered palatable even by the gain in pence that resulted from it.

It was near the end of the term, and at Clark's table some of the boys were prognosticating a happier future for themselves.

"A week hence," said the



"Do not give such large helps: it only leads to waste. I have had to complain of this before."

During his career at Cambridge had been more or less broken up.

Now, one of the essentials for the commercial success which undoubtedly attended Summers-Howson is an all-embracing eye. Summers-Howson possessed it. As he carved he watched how William Clark was carving. Gradually his eyebrows contracted; he sighed a little, and laid down his knife and fork. Then he wrote a few words on the back of an envelope, folded it, and sent it by a servant to William Clark. The note ran as follows—

"Do not give such large helps: it only leads to waste. I have had to complain of this before."

Clark flushed slightly, and ran one hand through his thin, fair hair nervously. Then he put on a smile for appearance's sake. He was beginning to carve again, when the servant asked if there was any answer. Clark nodded with absurd pleasantness. "Thank Mr. Summers-Howson," he said, "and tell him that I will remember." He had still three more boys to help, at the farther end of his table, and they subsequently said that Clark had spited them. He did not help himself. He sat back in his chair, and the artificial smile died away from his face. The awful sordidness of the whole thing had impressed itself sharply upon him, as it did every now and then. He wondered how much longer he would be

younger Jephson, "we shall be eating better grub than this. I shall be tucking in then. I went four times to turkey last Christmas." It was one of his dearest reminiscences.

"You're a hog!" said Jephson's neighbour, with his mouth full.

"Hog yourself!" replied Jephson. Repartee among the youth of "The Grange" had not yet got beyond the elementary stage.

On Clark's left sat a bright, good-looking little boy, called Bretton.

William Clark liked young Bretton. He was a well-born and well-trained boy; he was full of spirit and yet, when he was treated properly, docile. In a quaint, respectful way, Bretton looked after Clark a little. With the other masters he was frequently in trouble; he had a profound contempt for Summers-Howson, whom he believed, not altogether without reason, to be something of a fraud. But he had discovered Clark's strong points, or, at least, some of them, and he was really attached to him. He noticed now that Clark was not eating anything.

"Aren't you going to have any dinner, Sir?" he asked.

Clark sat up and gazed at the purple rag of a joint before him. "I don't fancy that I'm very hungry, Bretton."

Bretton had eaten a quarter of a pound of the very best chocolate immediately before dinner, and was,



"What is it zat makes me shudder when Weelkins writes 'la jardin' as he has mos' wickedly done in his last exercise?"

(Continued on page 23.)

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notwithstanding, exceedingly hungry himself. A want of appetite was to him a calamity, and he felt that he ought to administer consolation to William Clark.

"We're getting very near the end of term, Sir," he said, after a pause. This was delicate. It got away from a painful subject to one which Bretton thought must be particularly consoling. "I'm keenest on the Christmas holidays," he added.

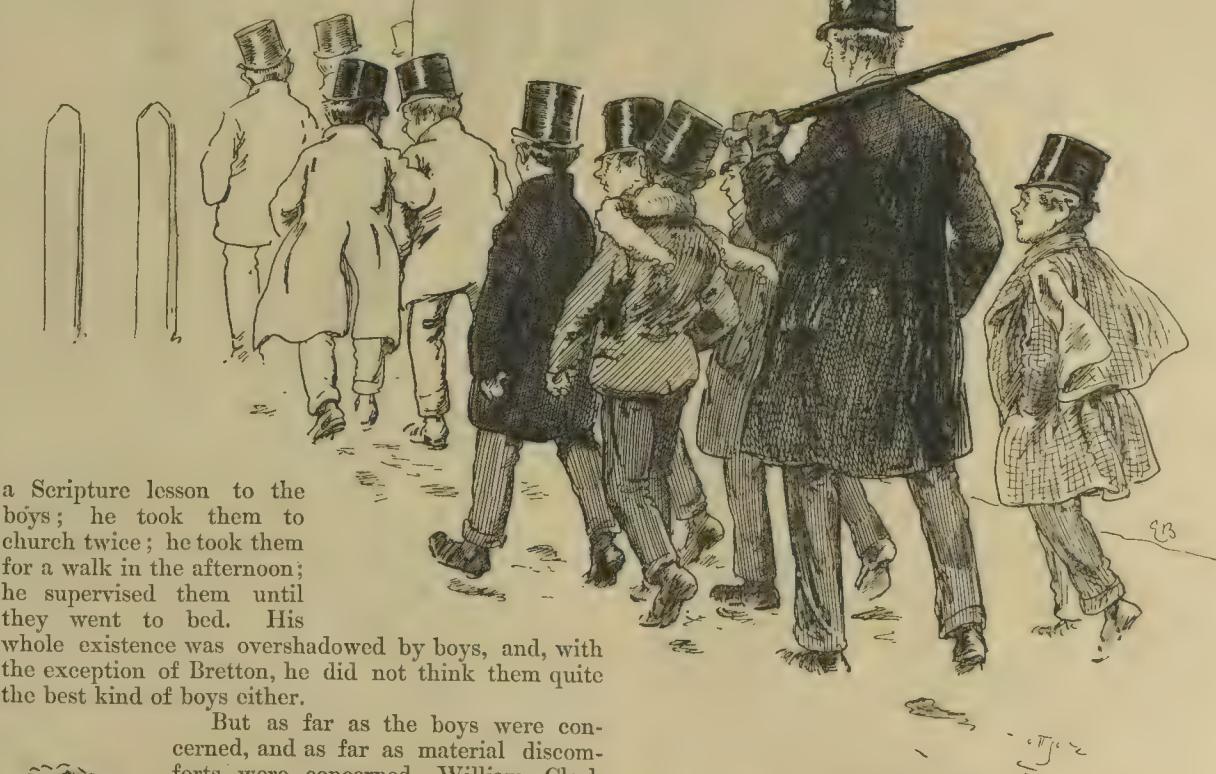
Clark chatted cheerfully enough with the boy for a minute or two, and then once more relapsed into silence and dejection. He would, he supposed, spend the Christmas holidays as usual—alone in lodgings, and the prospect was not very inviting. His father's death had left him alone in the world; he had made several friends at Cambridge, but the fact that they could now be useful to him had seemed to compel him to drop them. In some respect, however, the holidays were preferable to the term—they gave him more liberty and more privacy, and they freed him from Summers-Howson and his paying private school. Between the public school and the private school there is a great gulf fixed. The position of an assistant master at a public school is both good and pleasant: he is not overworked; he is well paid and well treated. On the other hand, the position of an assistant master at a private school is generally humiliating and intolerable; his work is frequently the work of a nursery governess; his status is a shade lower than that of the butler; his remuneration is wretched; of the ordinary comforts of life he has none. He frequently enters upon such work when he is still fresh from the luxurious life of his University, the possessor of a classical degree which fits him for no other profession; the possessor, moreover, of the education and instincts of a gentleman to make the profession

excellent as a luxury, but not as a commercial speculation. He wished that Bretton had not mentioned Christmas; for Christmas to a man who is poor and alone in the world is less happy than any other time.

On Sunday the routine began once more. He gave

was a thoroughly good master, and he should have known that as soon as he reached the culminating point he would lose Clark.

He reached that culminating point, and he lost Clark, and other things happened as well, on the following Monday. They took place in the larger of the two studies, in which morning school was conducted. It



His whole existence was overshadowed by boys.

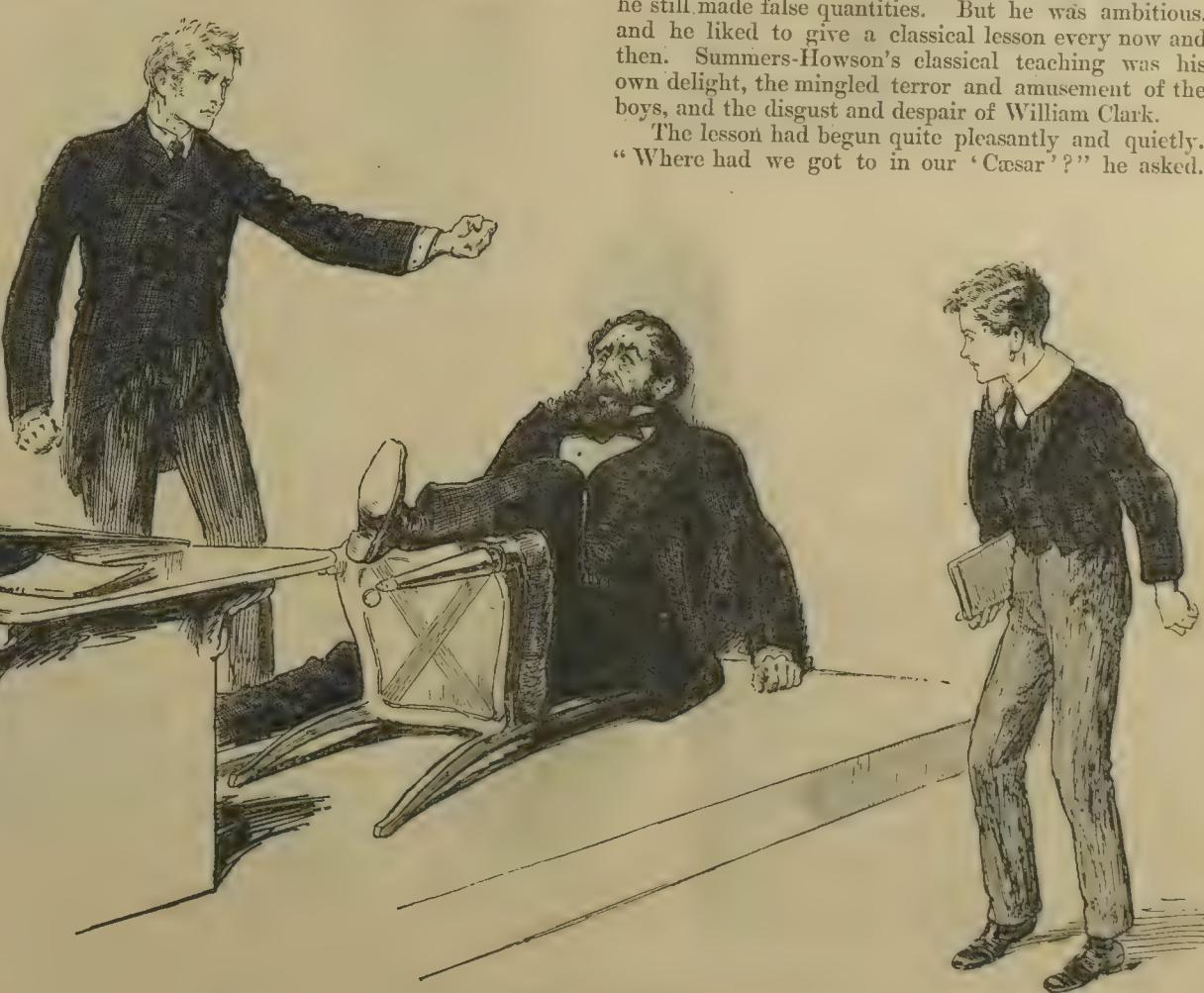
But as far as the boys were concerned, and as far as material discomforts were concerned, William Clark might have stopped on in his unenviable position as assistant master at "The Grange" until old age rendered him unfit for work. He was not an enthusiastic person, and although he was not doing well, he did not see how he could do any better. It was Summers-Howson who seemed likely to act as the last straw. From Summers-Howson's point of view the whole world was divided into two classes—parents and boys. To the parent of a pupil he habitually cringed; from anyone else he expected homage. He made Clark feel like a boy in the lower fifth who has not been behaving well. He spoke to the Frenchman with the poetical eyes or to the insignificant music master in exactly the same way as he would have spoken to Jephson or Bretton. But he seemed especially interested in finding out exactly how much Clark would stand; he was always devising fresh work for Clark, fresh insults for Clark, fresh humiliations and discomforts for Clark. It was foolish of him, because Clark

was the last hour in the morning. In this room three masters were taking three classes. At the farthest end the Frenchman, erect and eloquent before the blackboard, was expatiating on his new system,

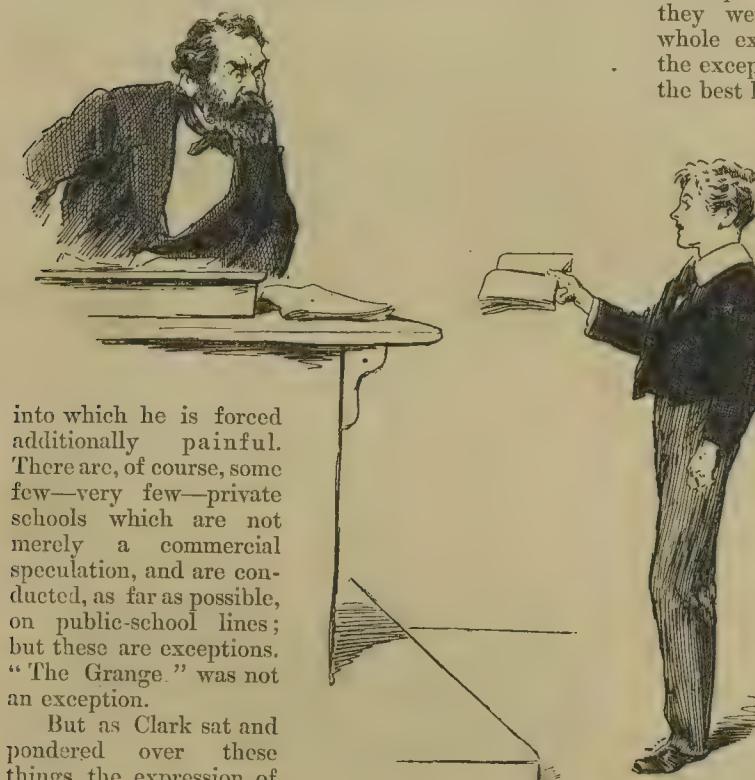
"You ask me som' rule for genders? I say, none! Zare is none. Of what use is it zat I give you a rule to which zare is hundreds of exceptions? What is it zat makes me shodder when Weelkins writes *la jardin*, as he has mos' wickedly done in his last exercise? Is it a rule?" He glanced dramatically round the third form, as if he were expecting an answer, and then added very impressively, "Nottin' of the sort, mos' certainly not. Eet is nature! Genders is a zing in French zat must grow op within you—slow. It most make you perfectly sick to see a mistake like 'la jardim.' Experience? Yes. Cultivation of the literature and conversation? Again yes. But rules? Mos' certainly not!"

Next to the Frenchman was Summers-Howson himself, sitting at a very comfortable desk, around which the fourth form stood and trembled. Summers-Howson was perfectly well qualified to teach elementary geography and elementary arithmetic; he was not capable of hearing a page of Latin grammar without the book before him, and if he had the book before him he still made false quantities. But he was ambitious, and he liked to give a classical lesson every now and then. Summers-Howson's classical teaching was his own delight, the mingled terror and amusement of the boys, and the disgust and despair of William Clark.

The lesson had begun quite pleasantly and quietly. "Where had we got to in our 'Caesar'?" he asked.



"You cowardly brute!"



into which he is forced additionally painful. There are, of course, some few—very few—private schools which are not merely a commercial speculation, and are conducted, as far as possible, on public-school lines; but these are exceptions. "The Grange" was not an exception.

But as Clark sat and pondered over these things, the expression of his face grew overcast and moody; and, as has already been pointed out, Summers-Howson had an all-embracing eye. Once more Clark had a short note handed to him by the servant—shorter even than the first—

"Don't sulk. I won't have it."

Clark tore the scrap of paper into small pieces slowly and methodically. "There is no answer," he said to the servant.

As he went upstairs to his room after dinner it occurred to him that things were getting a little beyond bearing. His room was, of course, at the very top of the house—the under-master's room is generally either an attic or a cellar—it served the double purpose of sitting-room and bed-room, with insufficient furniture for either; the fire had not been laid, and yesterday's cinders lay cold and uncleanly in the grate. It was Saturday afternoon—the one afternoon in the week that Clark had entirely to himself, freed from either teaching or supervision duty. It was fine, and possibly the over-worked housemaid had conjectured that Clark would go out, and would not want his fire until the evening. Possibly it was economy. Summers-Howson would naturally be unwilling to tempt his assistant master to burn more coal than was absolutely necessary. The window was open, and from the playground underneath Clark could hear voices. He collected his pipe and pouch and matches, and put them into his pocket—he was not allowed to smoke in the house—and started off for a long walk across the common. Here, at least, his thoughts were his own; he could review his position without being told that he was sulking. It was only three years ago that he left Cambridge, with the idea that a second class in classical honours would enable him to earn a comfortable and constantly increasing income. He had thought the University career the best possible investment for his capital. At least, he had no more delusions now; Cambridge was

"Twenty-fifth chapter? Ah! yes. Let us ask Jephson to read some of it—the Latin first, Jephson, clearly and correctly, if you please." Summers-Howson had spent some part of the previous Sunday evening in going through that twenty-fifth chapter with a crib, and even now had the translation open on his desk by the side of his "Cæsar," but he liked to create the impression that he could read any classical author at sight. Jephson stumbled through a few lines, and then began to construe. It happened that Jephson enjoyed the same crib that Summers-Howson himself used, so Jephson acquitted himself with no little brilliance. Some parsing which followed was also peaceful. Subsequently, however, a boy in Clark's class, which was close to Summers-Howson's, happened to drop a book. Now, to drop a book during school hours was, by the Summers-Howsonian code of ethics, not quite so bad as murder, but slightly worse than theft. Summers-Howson rose from his chair, and sighed deeply at the boy who had made the noise, looked pointedly at Clark, who took no notice of it whatever, and sat down with dignity. Then the boys in Summers-Howson's class knew that they must prepare for a storm.

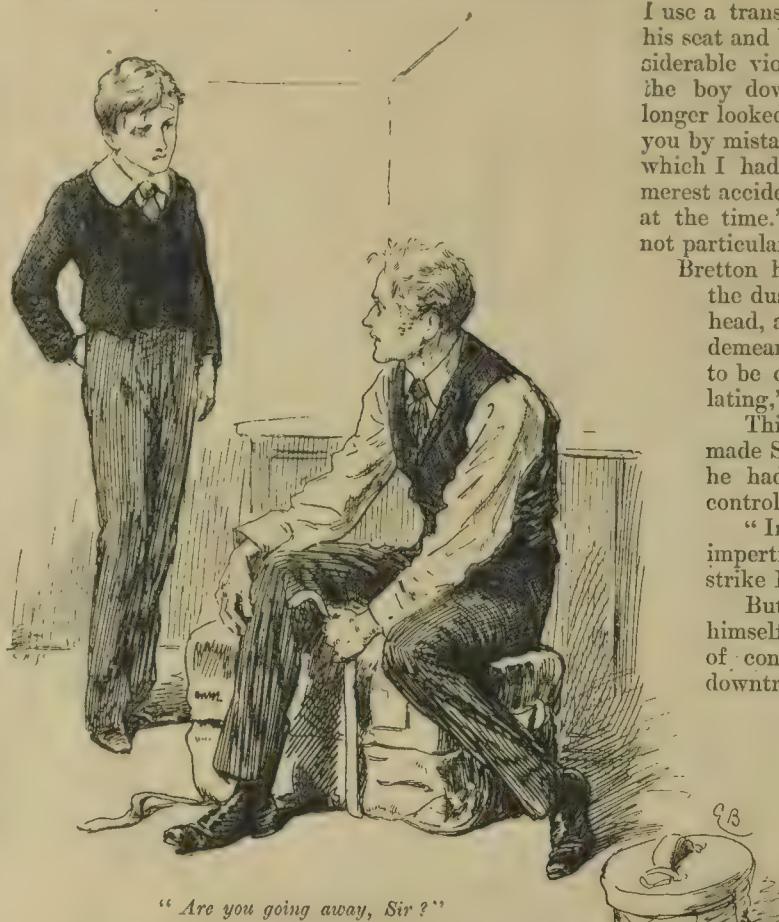
"Bretton," said Summers-Howson in the manner of a repressed volcano, "if you can spare a few moments from your conversation with Jephson, I should be pleased to discover a little of your ignorance of the lesson." Bretton read a few lines of the Latin with an air of exaggerated calm. Now, it happened that Bretton possessed a different edition from that which Summers-Howson used, and in this particular passage the readings in the two books were different.

"Are you reading that correctly?" asked Summers-Howson, severely.

"Yes, Sir."

"In that case your reading differs from mine." Summers-Howson leant back in his chair, looked critical, and stroked his beard. "On the whole, I prefer the reading which I have in my own edition. It seems to me to be more in accordance with the style of Cæsar." In assumption Summers-Howson was peculiarly magnificent. "Here is my book, Bretton. Read out to the class what you find there."

Bretton took the book and examined it. A sweet smile spread itself gently over his face. Then he answered in a distinct voice—



"Are you going away, Sir?"

"I beg your pardon, Sir, but you have made a mistake. You have given me your crib instead of the Latin."

Clark was writing up work on his own blackboard, within a yard or two of Summers-Howson's class, and could hear all that had taken place. He wore a look of suppressed amusement.

"My crib!" gasped Summers-Howson, breathless with rage. "My crib! How dare you assert that

I use a translation! How dare you!" Here he left his seat and boxed Bretton's ears; he did it with considerable violence, not to say brutality, and knocked the boy down. Clark watched the incident, and no longer looked amused. "That book, which I handed to you by mistake, was one which had belonged to a boy—which I had found and confiscated. It was by the merest accident that it happened to be upon my desk at the time." Summers-Howson was a glib liar, but not particularly convincing.

Bretton had picked himself up, and was brushing the dust from his clothes. He had cut his forehead, and the blood was trickling from it, but his demeanour was still calm. "It also happened to be open at the chapter which we were translating," he said.

This was not a judicious remark, because it made Summers-Howson even more furious than he had been before. He had completely lost control over himself.

"Impertinence to me!" he cried. "More impertinence!" and once more he advanced to strike Bretton.

But he did not strike Bretton. He found himself knocked back into his chair by a blow of considerable force and directness, and the downtrodden under-master, who had put him there, standing over him. There was absolute silence all over the room; the Frenchman paused in an eloquent exposition of "ze difficulties of ze sobjonctive"; every boy gazed open-eyed. William Clark had used personal violence to his head master! He, moreover, had addressed to him three words, shockingly audible through the silence—"You cowardly brute!"

The clock at the farther end of the class-room struck twelve. Morning school was over. The boys vanished with unusual quiet in the direction of the playground, and stood there in groups discussing the incident. Some of them asked the French master what he thought of it.

"I cannot bear to zink of it. Eet is too sad. I

(Continued on page 37.)

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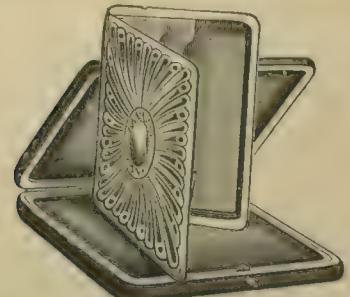


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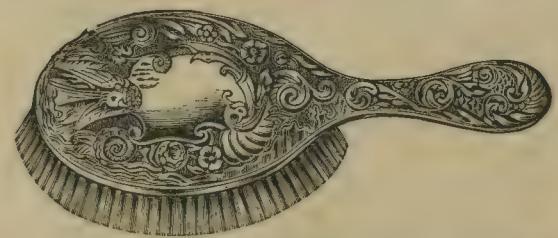
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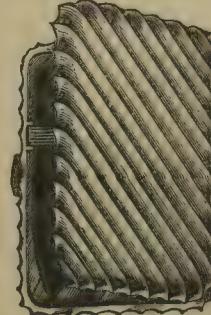
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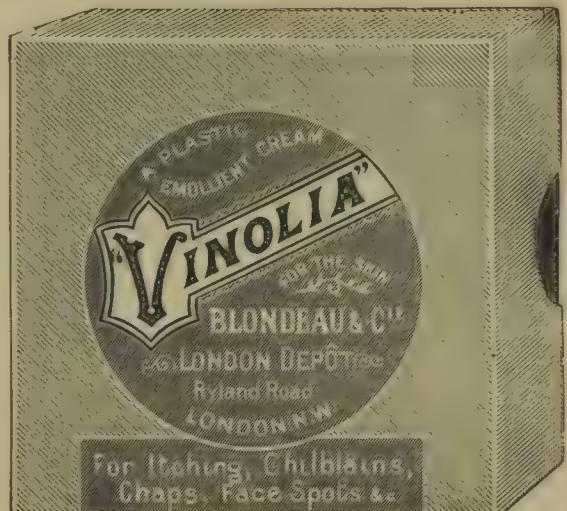
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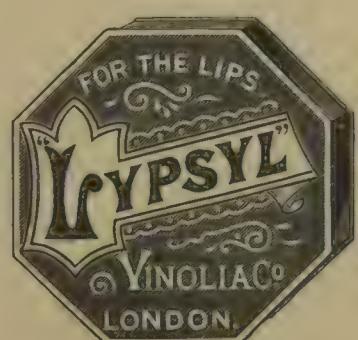
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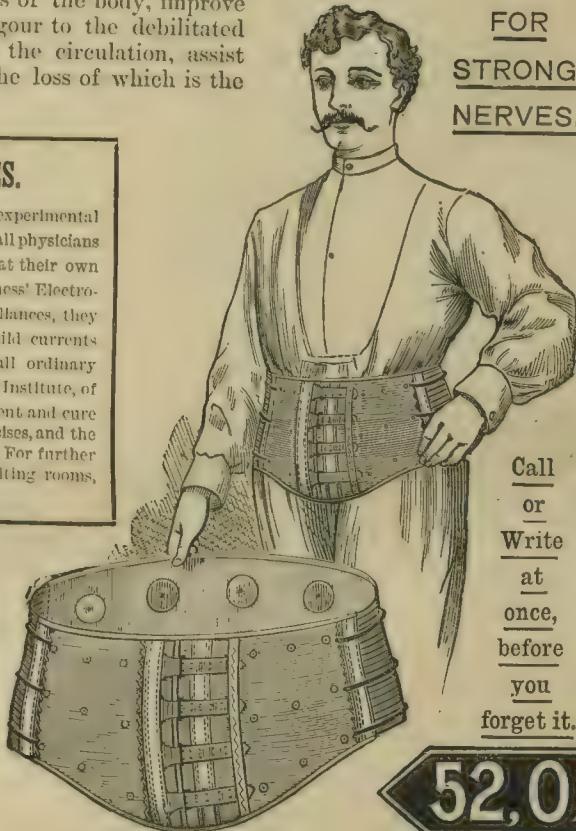
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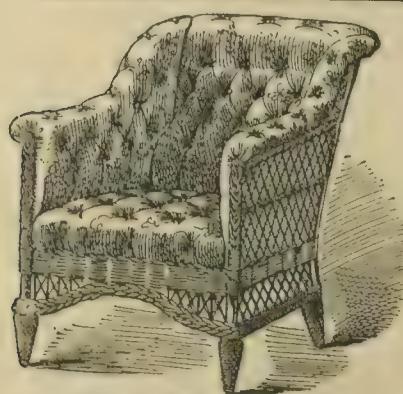
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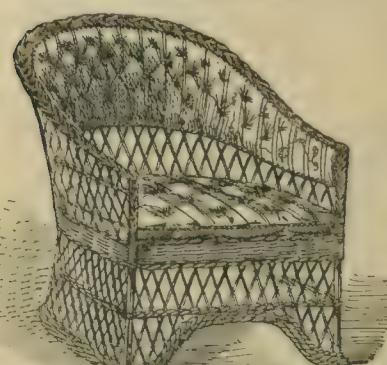
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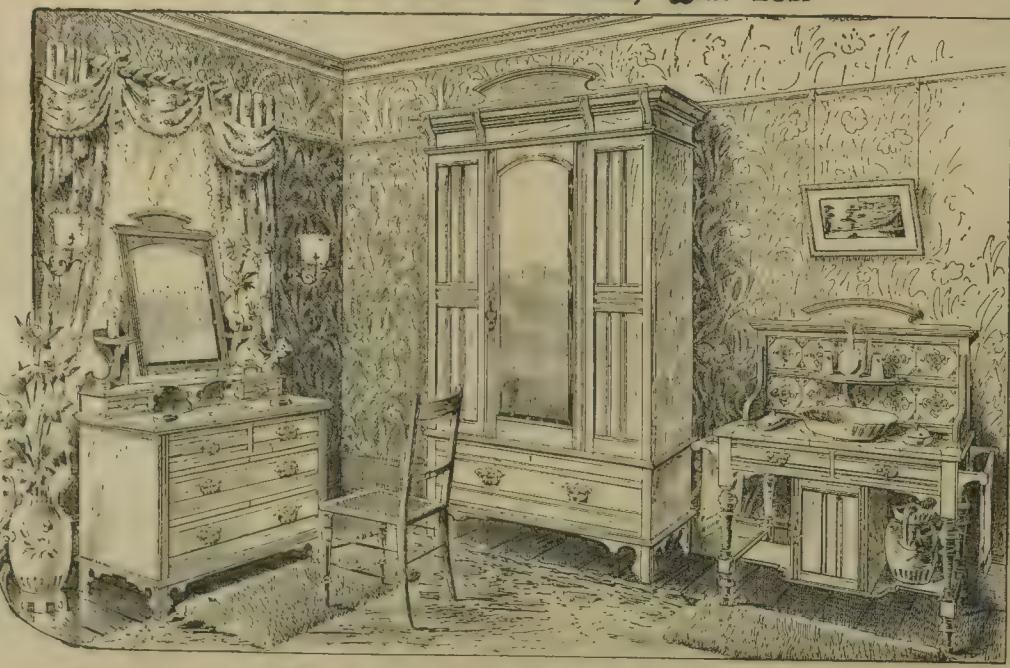
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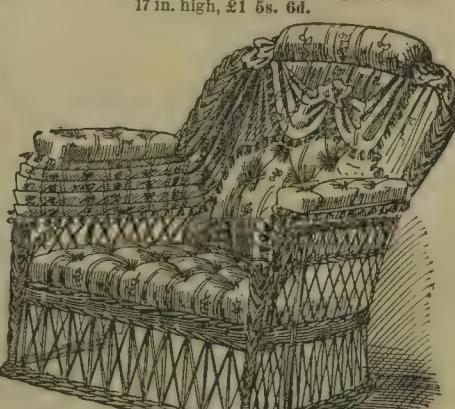
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regret mos' extremely the violence to Mr. Summers-Howson. Eet is deplorable." Then he added in French, more rapidly than the English-speaking races take their French as a rule: "Diable, mais c'est délicieux! V'là un spectacle qui m'a fait du bien. Mais c'est un amour—ce petit Clark!" It was, as he knew, safely unintelligible. In the meantime, Bretton had left the playground and gone down to the town on business; and in the class-room Summers-Howson was settling matters with Clark. There was no one else in the room. Summers-Howson had, as far as possible, resumed his normal dignity.

"I suppose it is hardly necessary, Mr. Clark," he said, "for me to tell you that you leave this house at once, and that I shall not require your services any further?"

Clark looked as he felt—very well pleased with himself. "It is, as you suppose, quite superfluous."

"I tolerated you so long as you were a harmless idiot, but now that you have become a dangerous maniac!"

"You are still quite superfluous, I am afraid," said Clark. "Almost anything which you could say to me would be superfluous. But you are also impudent, and I shall no longer allow you to be impudent to me. I shall, in fact, resent it."

Mr. Summers-Howson was aghast. He had not expected that Clark would take his dismissal so lightly. He was surprised to find that he had now reached the culminating point with Clark, and had come out upon quite a different Clark from the one to which he was accustomed.

"As far as references or testimonials are concerned,"

he began, but Clark, who was walking to the door, once more interrupted him.

"It will be time enough to talk about those when I apply for them." Then Clark went upstairs to pack his things.

As he was finishing this business, there was a knock at the door, and Bretton came in. Bretton began by stammering out some words of thanks, which Clark stopped. "Are you going away, Sir?" Bretton asked.

"Yes, I am going at once. Why?"

"I have telegraphed to my father, and I think that he will come this afternoon. I am sure that he would very much like to see you, Sir. It would be awfully good of you if you would just stop until he came."

"I am afraid that I can't. You can tell him what happened very well. I do not suppose that you will remain here either."

"No, I am sure of that. But I should like my father to have your account of what happened."

Clark wrote his London address on his card, and gave it to Bretton. "You can give your father that, if he wishes to ask me any questions. You're all right, Bretton?" he added, after a pause.

"Yes, I'm all right, thanks to you, Sir. But I've not quite—not quite done with this yet."

"I think," Bretton added, when he said good-bye to Clark, "that I shall see you again before long."

Colonel Bretton arrived at The Grange that afternoon. He had a short interview with his son and rather a longer one with Summers-Howson. Then he went away, and took his son with him.

That night Summers-Howson felt very depressed. He had lost a pupil. He had also lost a master whom

he knew in his heart to be unusually valuable. He had also had some very plain language addressed to him by a parent, and with Summers-Howson the words of a parent carried weight. His depression was so obvious that his wife inquired the reason for it.

"The fact of the case is, dear, that I've just had to sack Clark—drink, of course; the old story, though I'd never suspected it. And, as always happens, one of the nicest boys has been led away by his example—young Bretton. His father implored me to keep the lad, but I couldn't do it. Shocking! Very shocking!" As a good bold misstatement of facts the explanation which Summers-Howson gave to his wife may also be pronounced very shocking.

* * * * *
Clark received a very warm letter of thanks from Colonel Bretton, together with the request that he would come and stop with him for a little time. There would be people staying in the house, and it might amuse him. Besides, Colonel Bretton had a project which he very much wished to discuss with Clark.

Clark refused the invitation; for he had always regarded an obligation as a thing of which one should take no advantage. But although he spent Christmas alone, he did not spend it unhappily. He had discovered something which he had lost for some years, and it gave him great pleasure to find it again. This thing was his self-respect. He had lost it, as far as he could remember, very shortly after his arrival at The Grange.

However, Colonel Bretton is not the man to relinquish a project, and this particular project is much to the advantage of William Clark.

THE WHITE HAT..

BY L. F. AUSTIN.

IN a quiet little street not a hundred miles from Piccadilly, at six o'clock one Christmas Eve, the world might have observed, if it had not been quite irrelevantly occupied, the dapper person of Stephen Timson, of Herne Bay, author, newly arrived in London with a manuscript or two, a great sense of the dignity of letters, and a breathless expectation of Clubland. Stephen was a country member of the Scriblerus Club, an institution designed to hasten the Millennium by inducing the publishing leopard to lie down with the literary kid. This noble idea was due to the fertile genius of the well-known novelist, Mr. MacPartridge, whose admirable contributions to our literature are agreeably diversified by a practical philanthropy. Pending the erection of some palatial edifice in Piccadilly, Mr. MacPartridge had established the temporary quarters of the Scriblerus Club on the first floor of a secluded hostelry, into which Stephen Timson was for the first time turning, with the timid and hesitating stride of the undergraduate who is seeking his Alma Mater.

In the doorway stood a gaunt commissionaire, who received Stephen's inquiries with an abstracted gaze. "Are there any letters for Mr. Timson?" Stephen had not the least expectation of correspondence, but he knew that the first duty a clubman owes to civilisation is to ask for letters. The commissionaire glanced at a row of letter-racks, very sparsely tenanted, as if this were a case of preserved insects in a museum which some piratical entomologist wanted to rifle. "No," said the custodian, severely, "there are no letters for Mr. Timson." So Stephen wrote his name with a trembling flourish in the members' book, and went upstairs, nervously apprehensive of finding himself in the company of the great MacPartridge and other luminaries of that literary world in which he was the humblest and dimmest of glowworms. It struck him presently that there was no buzz of conversation, no burst of Homeric laughter, none of the genial noises, in short, which might be expected to proceed from the conclave of wit and humour. The first floor was as still as the tomb, and this was the less surprising, as not a soul was discoverable in the small and precise back parlour, in which empty ash-trays mutely proclaimed devotion to the absent weed, or where six forlorn little white tables seemed to be performing some penitential rite with cutlery and candles; or in the spacious apartment furnished like the middle-class shrine of the antimacassar, gently streaked with literature in the shape of irreproachable works from Mudie's.

Stephen was rather chilled by this desolation, but he brightened a little when he perceived two small trays with tea-cups. "MacPartridge has been here," he thought, "taking tea with some luminous writer; and, of course, he has gone home to his own fireside. Every author should have a fireside on Christmas Eve, with a gentle companion and—some prattling babes." Here Stephen blushed all to himself, for he was very sensitive to the tender passion. He had often speculated whether a very vague invitation from the founder of the Scriblerus Club to come to town some day had meant that the portals of the MacPartridge mansion would be hospitably opened to him. When he sent his social homily on "The Decline of the White Hat" to the editor of the *Cheapside Magazine*, the great MacPartridge had congratulated him warmly on his aspiration for the free distribution of white hats in the dog-days among all sorts and conditions of men. "This is the spirit of true benevolence," wrote MacP., "and when Society shall

become one vast co-operative Hatter I am sure that your suggestion will be recognised as having been the germ of the movement, and your fame will be the Hatband of the higher civilisation." Since then Stephen had wondered in his abashed and fluttering way whether there were any tender young MacPartridge who might be amorously "potted" with Cupid's fowling-piece; though, to do him justice, this sporting metaphor never entered his head, and would have filled him with indignation.

As he sat lost in this pleasing reverie, he was suddenly disturbed by the entrance of a waiter, who flung himself into an easy-chair with the audible remark, "Blest if you aren't run off your head in this house!"

literary air." (He called it "hair.") "When you've been waitin' on customers as don't know Dagonet from Bradshaw, you're glad of a quiet place where you can think over some little ideas of your own. And as the members don't come just yet, I like to do my best to keep up the ventilation of the club, so to speak."

The waiter paused, and fixed an inquiring gaze on Stephen, who sipped his sherry with a dim consciousness that this was not the feast of reason he had looked forward to.

"If I might make so bold, Sir," said the waiter, who was fumbling in his pocket.

"Certainly," said Stephen.

"Well, Sir, you see I can't help thinking the



"I call it 'Pickles in the Pantry.'"

This is the only place in it where you can get a minute's peace." Then catching sight of Timson, he slowly edged himself off the chair, muttering under his breath, "A bloomin' author, as I lives and eats!"

Stephen felt that it was due to his newly acquired dignity to order something, so he murmured feebly, "Glass of sherry," a refreshment which at Herne Bay was usually accompanied by an orange.

"Has Mr. MacPartridge been here to-day?" he asked when the waiter reappeared.

"No, Sir. You are the first member we have seen for a week. Two gentlemen had tea about a month ago. I've kept their cups, you see, to make the place look sociable. 'Though lost to sight, to memory dear,'" added the waiter, with the manner of a man who strives by pertinent quotations to keep a neglected literature in repair.

"I come in here sometimes," he continued, in an apologetic tone, "just to breathe what you may call a

members, when they do come, will want to read something a little nearer home than this here." He pointed to a stout volume about Persia. "What I should like to ask you is whether I might leave this on the table?" He brought a copy of *Tit-Bits* out of his pocket, and turned over the leaves with an appreciative finger. "Of course you know the paper, Sir? I dare say you write in it?"

Stephen feebly disclaimed that distinction.

"Well, Sir, it may be a conceited thing to say to a member of this club, but I do! There's a prize poem of mine in this number. I call it 'Pickles in the Pantry' and, if you don't mind, I'll read you a few lines, just to show you there's nothing in it the youngest member mightn't read without a blush—

How did I part with my wits, Sir? What was it shattered my nerves?
Ah! wait till you're palsied by pickles when you're trying to prig the preserves!

I once was the jauntiest funkey, untouched by trouble or care,
I carried the palm for my calves, Sir, from all the élite of the
Square.
Those calves that once fluttered the fancy of many a nurserymaid,
Ah! now would excite the disdain, Sir, of a doll in the Lowther
Arcade.
Should ever arise in your bosom a horrible yearning for jam,
Just think of the swell that I was, Sir!—and look on the thing
that I am!
The scene of my fall was the pantry, where I stole in the dead
of the night,
And groped for the jam in the dark, Sir, for I feared to be
caught with a light.
With a burglar's grip on the jar, Sir, I thrust in a felon's
thumb—
Great Snakes! it was Indian chili! and I thought it was home-
made plum!

Now, Sir, what I want to ask you is, if you don't think the members would be cheered up a bit if they found this poem here when they came, instead of sitting down to a big overdone joint like that?" Here the waiter indicated the Persian volume with a disdainful jerk.

Stephen faintly murmured his eagerness to see such an important proposition referred to the committee, and then hurriedly inquired whether he could have any dinner.

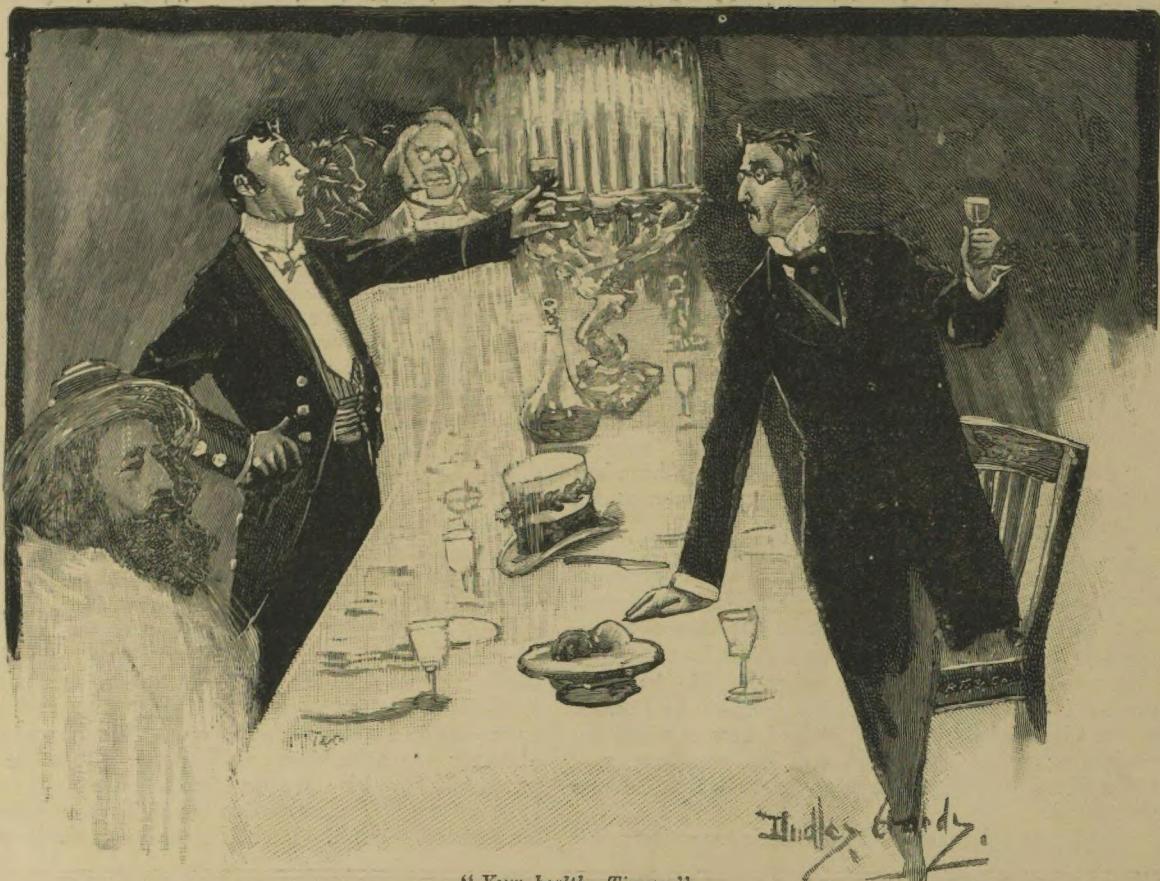
"Goose and apple-sauce is off," said the waiter, who showed his disappointment by the severity of his professional manner. "There's roast beef and plum pudding. Plum pudding is good with brandy," he added, with a critical glance at Timson's proportions, "for parties as are strong."

"Snapdragon," said Stephen, with a sudden reminiscence of the simple gaieties which painted Herne Bay red on Christmas Eve. "And, waiter—I—I think I'll have a bottle of port."

Great resolutions come even to the most modest, and Stephen felt that on such an occasion the entire dignity of the Scriblerus Club devolved upon him, though it must be confessed that before the bottle was finished an uncontrollable desire for slumber stretched him on the most comfortable couch.

II.

It seemed very odd to Stephen next day that he had no distinct recollection of having gone to bed. He supposed that he must have spent the night in one of the rooms of the hotel, but even as to the details of dressing and breakfasting in the morning his mind was a blank. The only vivid impression he had was that the commissaire had handed him a letter from MacPartridge, inviting him to dinner, but he did not know where this document was, nor could he remember a single phrase of it. The singularity of this situation, however, was totally eclipsed by the circumstance that he found him-



"Your health, Timson."

self wearing a white hat. Though he had studied white hats, and in the celebrated essay of which mention has been made had deplored the decay of a civilising usage, he had never been bold enough to don such a headpiece, even in summer. Yet here he was in a white hat on Christmas Day!

In the street Stephen suddenly recalled the passage in which the ambitious essayist had described the mortifications that the cult of the white hat sometimes inflicted on its devotees, who were rudely indicted by a thoughtless rabble on the wholly unfounded charge of stealing a useful but undignified animal. He was considerably relieved to notice that his hat attracted no attention from the passers by; but he was quite unprepared for the startling experience of which it presently made him the hero. The snow fell as Stephen had never seen it fall, even on a Christmas card. Down it

came in gigantic flakes, which threatened to make for him not merely a mantle but a burial-place. For he began to feel himself encased by solid snow, so that he walked with great difficulty, and could scarcely see where he was going. All of a sudden he came to a dead stand, and heard a tremendous shouting of childish trebles. "Hullo, boys! here's a snow-man!" was the cry, and several violent thuds all over his person, followed by a sensation of a wet crash right on his nose, convinced Stephen that he was actually being snowballed. The next moment off went his hat, and then somebody grasped his hand and shook it warmly.

"Why, it must be Mr. Timson," said a genial voice, "and in a white hat too! You must excuse the exuberance of these urchins, Mr. Timson. They mistook you in that hat for the sculptured image which

(Continued on page 40.)

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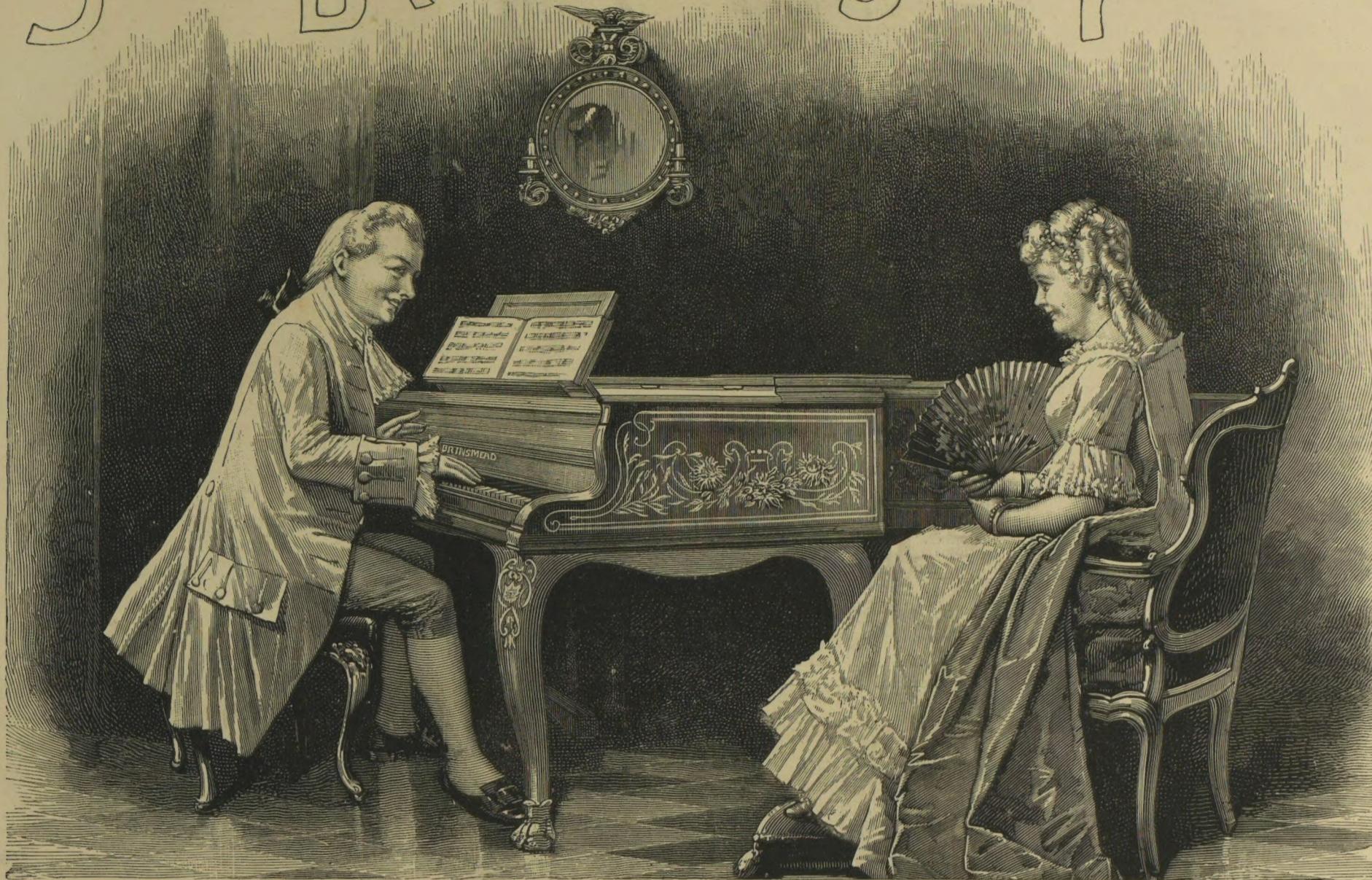
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may be lawfully pelted to-day. Now, boys, what ought you to say to a gentleman in a white hat?"

"Who stole the donk?" began one chubby imp, but he was awed into silence by a loud cough from his questioner.

"These are some of my waifs from the East-End, Mr. Timson. I generally have a few of them to spend Christmas Day with me. You see the ill effects of their early training in the lingering prejudice against the institution which you have so powerfully vindicated."

The peculiarity of this meeting with Mr. MacPartridge was less surprising to Stephen than his host's next observation.

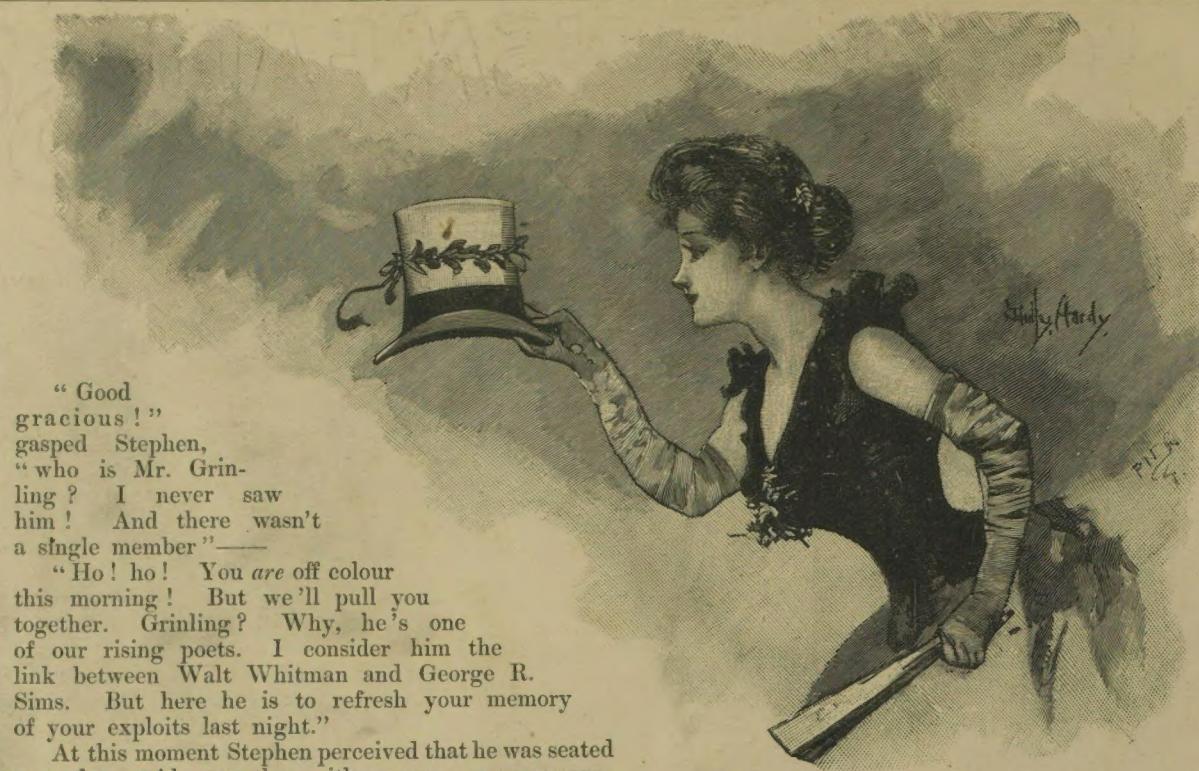
"I hear that you dined at the Scriblerus last night. Sorry I could not be there, but you had capital company."

"Really," said Stephen, "I don't remember"—

"Of course not," laughed MacPartridge. "The brandy in the pudding, you know, and then a whole bottle of port! That was coming it pretty strong! Oh! we have heard of you, Timson. You're a little hazy to-day, naturally, but Grinling says you were the life and soul of the party."

"The party!"

"Yes; Grinling says they were all there—all the incorporated authors. You were in luck, Timson, for a more sociable crew than the members of the Scriblerus is not to be found in the haunts of literature. A man can never feel lonely in a club like ours. It is always rich and varied and full of sparkle. But you are our chief acquisition, Grinling says. The fellows were so moved by the eloquent tribute you paid the publishers in your speech that they gave three cheers for the trade. And then your recitation"—



"Good gracious!"
gasped Stephen,
"who is Mr. Grinling? I never saw
him! And there wasn't
a single member!"

"Ho! ho! You are off colour
this morning! But we'll pull you
together. Grinling? Why, he's one
of our rising poets. I consider him the
link between Walt Whitman and George R.
Sims. But here he is to refresh your memory
of your exploits last night."

At this moment Stephen perceived that he was seated
at a long table, together with a numerous company,
whose faces touched him with the vague proximity of
photographs and portraits in frontispieces. For instance,
here was a shadowy outline which looked like the head
of George Meredith, and there was a beard which dimly

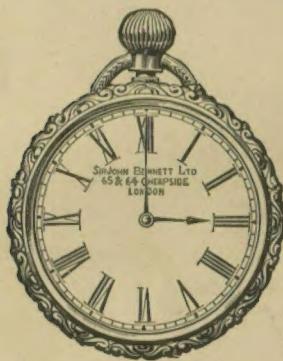
"Won't you put on your beautiful hat, Mr. Timson?"

(Concluded on page vi.)

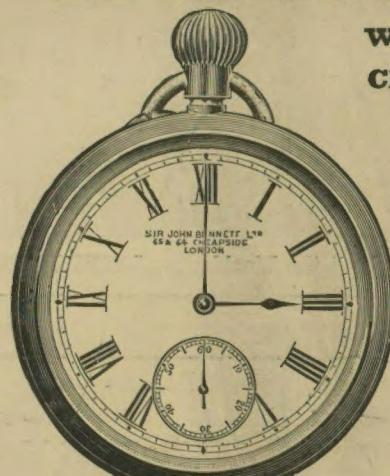
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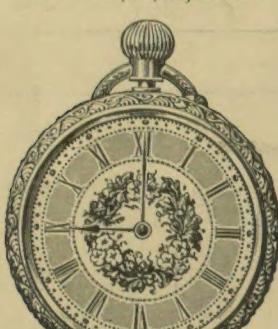
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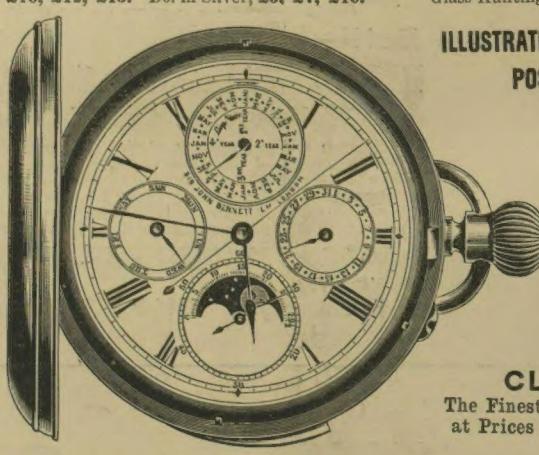


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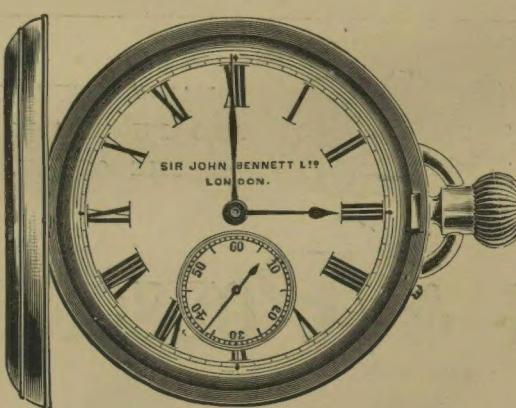
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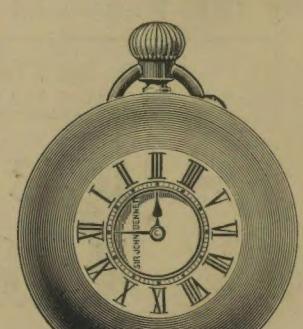
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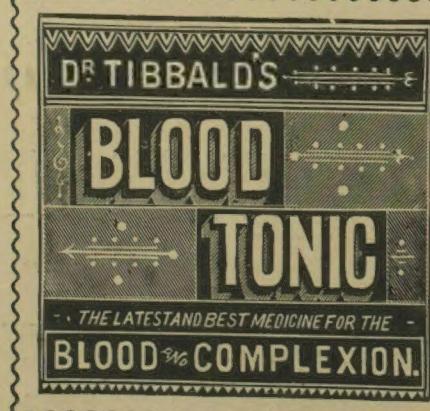


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